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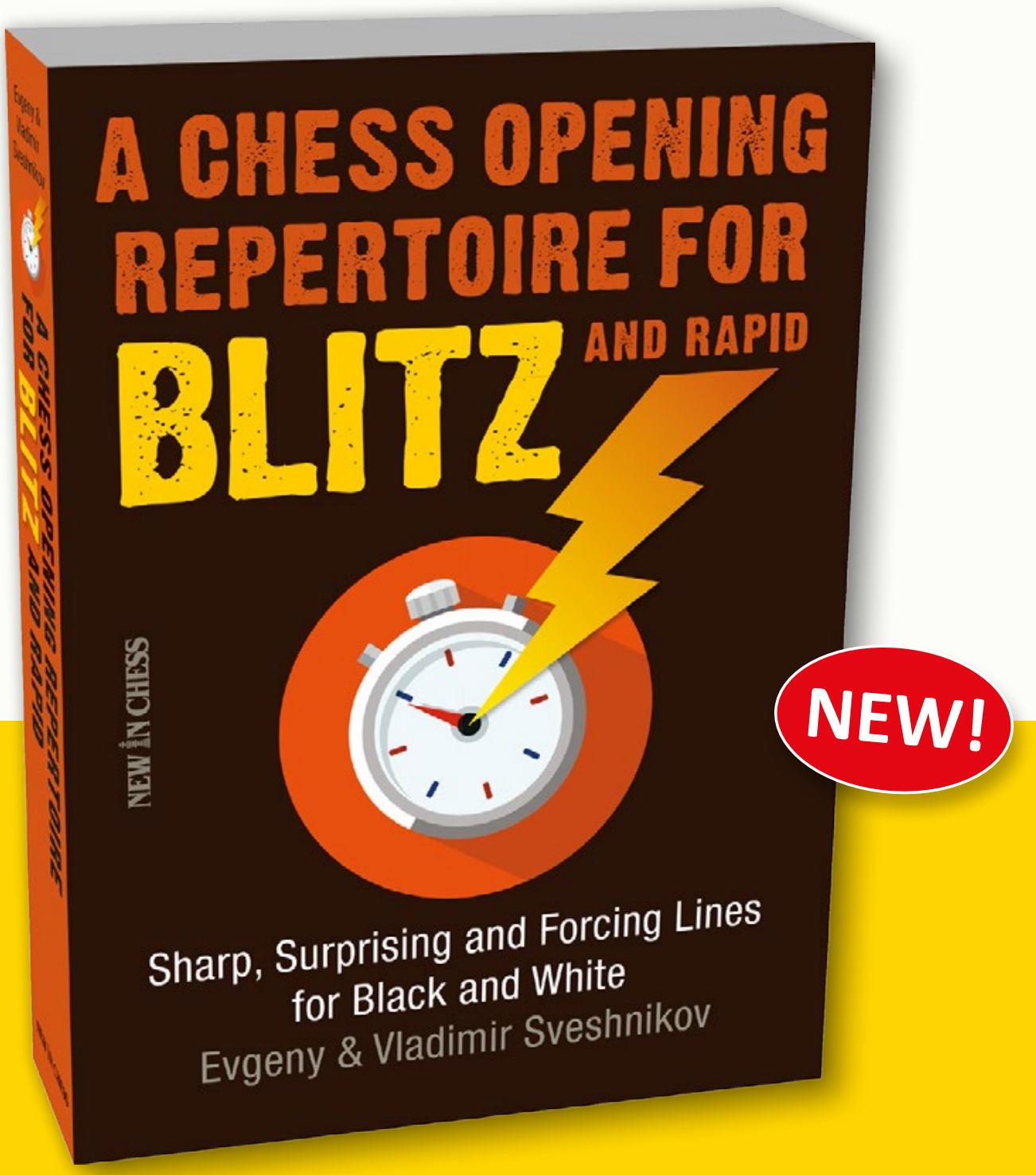
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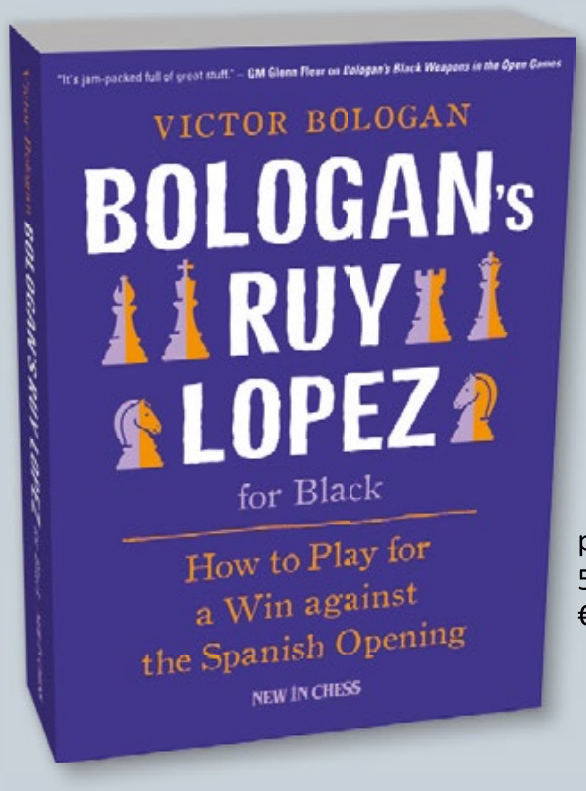
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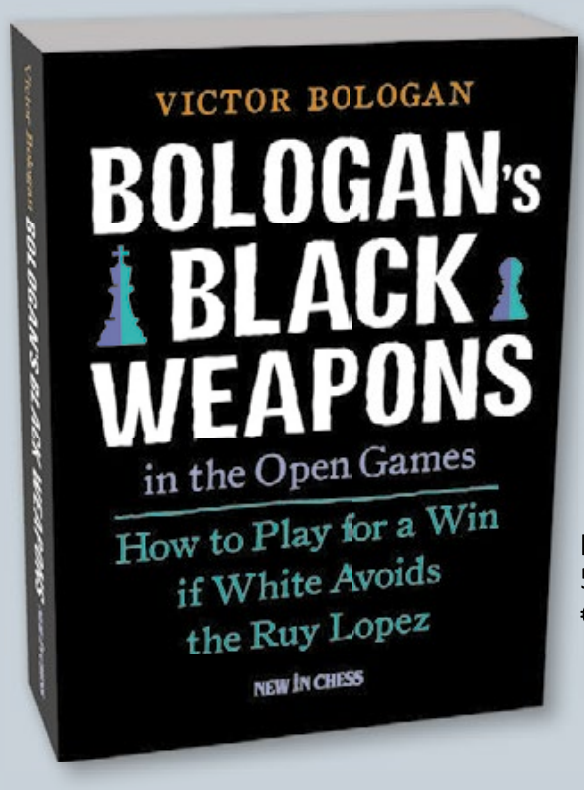

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COVER
Magnus Carlsen: David Llada

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'Chess players tend to be selfish.'

'Caruana has beaten the champion several times, he has won numerous super-tournaments, his prestige in the chess world is high. All that remains is to demonstrate his strength once more in the Candidates'.' – *Sergey Shipov*

Fritz 15

New Fritz, new friend

The completely reworked "friend" mode makes Fritz 15 the ideal training partner. During the course of a game, Fritz is able to constantly tailor its level to your playing strength and how much time you are using. The program can give you a sign when a tactical opportunity presents itself or point out typical mistakes to help you improve. Another exciting element is the new evaluation function that analyzes your playing strength throughout the game. Where are your strengths – where are your weaknesses? The opening? Middlegame? Or perhaps the endgame? Fritz 15 gives you an ELO rating for all three phases! You definitely need to see this!

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New author, new engine

Vasik Rajlich is new to the Fritz team. The American shook up the world of computer chess just a few years ago, reaching the top with his program, "Rybka". He is the author of the new Fritz 15 engine, so there's no question that it will be one of the world's strongest!

Excellent overview, better access

If you watch a lot of training videos or work extensively with databases, the revamped database window is something you'll love. It doesn't just automatically display all the Fritztrainer or other courses installed on your hard drive, the improved game list also offers enhanced access options and sorting functions – in a manner similar to the original ChessBase software!

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Don’t we all?

If there’s one regular feature in the magazine that everybody has a strong opinion about it must be the Just Checking questionnaire. On more than one occasion readers have come up to me to explain the triviality of this brief Q&A and urged me to use this space for better purposes.

There are two reasons why so far these pleas have not been honoured. To begin with, almost anyone who gets the magazine immediately turns to the last page, including many of the detractors just mentioned. And secondly, it’s great to see that after all these years the interviewees keep coming up with original and unexpected answers. As Yannick Pelletier does this time. To the question ‘Is there something you’d love to learn?’ the Swiss GM didn’t reply ‘playing the piano’ or ‘ballroom dancing’ but ‘chess’. Yes, chess! Don’t we all?

> ‘Why did nobody come up with this answer before?’

All I could think was: why did nobody come up with this answer before?

There is a lot to learn and enjoy on the following pages. If you like to work on your endgame – and there are many experts who will tell you that this is more profitable than studying openings – have a look at Jan Timman’s column on instructive endgame errors. Or drink in the beauty of the masterly technique of endgame virtuosos Magnus Carlsen and Anish Giri.

Judit Polgar shows what the bishop pair can do for you, while besides a new SOS idea there is also plenty of opening instruction in the annotated games and Matthew Sadler’s book review.

What else? Jimmy Adams portrays Mikhail Chigorin, Russia’s first world-class grandmaster and one of the greatest attacking players of all time. And Maxim Dlugy believes you can make some extra money if you follow his tips for a successful chess video.

But first you may want to read Sergey Shipov’s preview of the Candidates’ Tournament. Who will earn the right to challenge the World Champion?

The World Champion, Magnus Carlsen – who leaves us no doubt that he is back (was he ever away?) and is prominently present in this issue.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam
Editor-in-Chief

‘Open your streets this city of Mexico, like the arms of a new lover’, begins a work by the Mexican contemporary poet Jaime Sabines Gutiérrez. He need not worry: as the world’s largest city, Mexico City makes a fairly promiscuous companion, and the problem is not so much getting the streets to open up as to prevent them from absorbing everything that comes their way – even chess!

This once used to be the site of the wonderful old neo-Classical Regis Hotel located at the corner of Balderas and Avenida Juárez in the historic centre of Mexico City. But in 1985 it toppled after a powerful and fatal earthquake, and the area subsequently was designated as a park in solidarity to the 5,000 who sadly died, and renamed Plaza de la Solidaridad (Solidarity Square). There, you’ll now find a vibrant community full of warm-hearted locals – all of whom seemingly committed to playing chess.

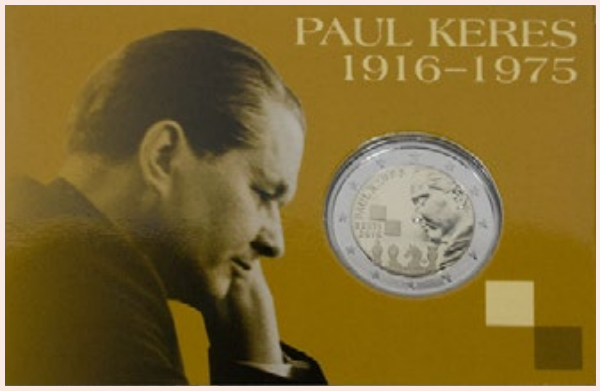
Want to play chess in Mexico yourself? The 2016 edition of the Copa Independencia will be held in Mexico City in mid-September, with the organizers promising to make it an event to remember, by being bigger and better with more overseas players and a large prize fund on offer. (Photo: Alina l’Ami)

Solidarity in Chess

NIC's Café

Minted

A hundred years after his birth, Estonian great Paul Keres (1916-1975) still ranks in the annals of the game as the greatest player never to have played in, let alone won a World Championship match.



Paul Keres: first on a bank note, now also on a two-euro coin.

Keres remains a national hero in his homeland. He was immortalized on a bank note (five krooni), and when he died of a heart attack in Helsinki in 1975, on his way home from winning the Canadian Open in Vancouver, he received a state funeral in Tallinn with thousands lining the street.

To get his centenary year underway, Keres also becomes the first chess player to be immortalized on both a coin and a bank note, with his face now adorning 500,000 two-euro coins – designed by Estonian artist Riho Luuse. In the meantime Eestipost has also issued a new Paul Keres stamp.

Another fitting tribute was a new statue erected in one of the Tallinn parks, depicting Keres sitting at the board, towering over a position from the last game he played in Vancouver, against Walter Browne. Nice, but for a little detail... It would have been even more fitting if they had had the position the right way round! Oops. Keres was Black in that game, and Browne resigned shortly after 43...♖d1+.

Double fun: meet your hero and get a winning position.

Driven

There's no denying that World Champion Magnus Carlsen is a driven player. And for such a driven player it seems only too apt that he recently starred in a global advertising campaign for the iconic Porsche Carrera alongside tennis star Maria Sharapova, and a young, partly computer-generated boxing legend Muhammad Ali – all appearing with their digital doubles and the slogan: 'Only the best have a chance against the best.'

The point behind the ad is that the only car that will beat the 911 this

What do you play when you face your digital double?

year will be the new 2016 version of the 911 that's due to be launched in the spring – which set us wondering. What, with Magnus' winnings in London and Qatar and his fee for the Porsche ad, will he be rushing out to buy a Carrera 911? The short answer is no – and not because he doesn't like the car; in fact, we have it on good authority that the World Champion, who already bought a Tesla, has been seduced by the Porsche 911.

The only trouble is, as Magnus revealed during an interview in *The Sunday Times*, he has to be driven everywhere, because he doesn't have a driving licence. 'The main obstacle is all those traffic lessons,' says Magnus. 'It seems so tedious to me. I like the general idea of driving, but... the theory test. There will always be something I would like to do more than that.'

Wang Way

While the cream of world chess was busy fighting it out at the Qatar Masters Open in Doha, you could have been mistaken in believing that one member of the Chinese delegation had boarded the wrong plane and ended up on the opposite side of the Arabian Peninsula, to wit the United Arab Emirates.

But no. Wang Hao continues to defy the stereotype of Chinese players by very much going his own way. Feeling that the field in Qatar was a tad too strong he opted for the 4th Al Ain Classic (only 50 GMs there) and it paid off big-time for the former Chinese number one, as he dominated the field for a trademark victory with a round to spare.

His margin of victory was such, that he bounced up the ratings by 14 places to 2700+ once again.

When we will see him play again is unclear. Wang Hao is doing a Masters in Communication and is crazy about reading and video games.

Although he says he spends little time on chess, he didn't seem to be rusty in Al Ain. Look what he did to former Junior World Champion Zaven Andriasyan, currently rated 2594.

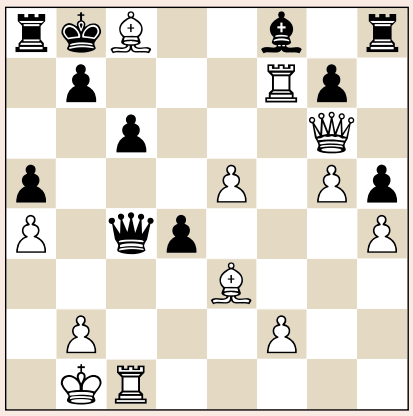
SL 4.5 – D17
Wang Hao
Zaven Andriasyan
Al Ain 2015 (3)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.a4 ♗f5 6.♘e5 ♘bd7 7.♘xc4 ♘b6 8.♘e5 a5 9.e3 e6 10.g4 ♗g6 11.h4 h5 12.g5 ♘fd5 13.♘xg6 fxg6

Black's pawn structure has been fa-

Wang Hao: victory with a round to spare.

tally damaged – but rather than go for the niceties of an endgame squeeze, Wang Hao opts to immediately go for the jugular. **14.♕c2 ♘e7 15.e4! ♕xd4 16.♗e3 ♕b4 17.0-0-0 ♘ec8** If 17...♘c4, 18.♗xc4 ♕xc4 19.♖d4 ♕a6 20.♖hd1, with an overpowering position. **18.e5 ♘d5 19.♕xg6+ ♔d7 20.♖d4 ♕e7 21.♘xd5 exd5 22.♗h3+ ♔c7 23.♖f4! ♔b8 24.♖f7 ♕b4 25.♗xc8 ♕c4+** If 25...♔xc8 26.♕e6+ ♔b8 27.♕e8 mate. **26.♔b1 d4 27.♖c1**



27...♕d5 will run into 28.♗xd4!, and Black can't take the bishop, as after 28...♕xd4 White crashes through with 29.♖xb7+ and mate! 1-0.

Court Martial

The number of grandmasters in chess has reached such heights that many feel the title has lost much of its splendour. What to do? Create a new title above GM? Remove the GM title from someone who has fallen below a certain rating plateau? But the title is issued for life and can't be taken back.... or can it? It now seems titles can indeed be removed, if the FIDE Ethics Commission is anything to go by.

They recently issued their first court martial – sorry, judgement – on cheating since the setting-up of the Anti-Cheating Commission by handing GM Gaoiz Nigalidze a three-year playing ban, while also stripping him of his GM title. As you may remember (see New In Chess 4/2015), he had been caught cheating in the Dubai Open playing Tigran L. Petrosian. His iPod Touch was found hidden in

Gaoiz Nigalidze: from GM to IM.

the toilet, with their game crunching away on the engine and his Facebook page open.

In their statement, the FIDE Ethics Commission explained that '[Nigalidze] was stripped of his Grandmaster (GM) title on the basis of unworthiness. However, his international master (IM) title, obtained already in 2009, was left intact in recognition of his remorseful and cooperative conduct in the investigation.'

Death of a Don

It was with sadness that we learned of the death, at the age of 83, of Don Luis Rentero, the godfather of the Linares supertournaments in Spain. The supermarket and hotel magnate took the little backwater Andalusian city built around metal mining and heavy industry by the scruff of the neck and somehow managed to turn it into one of the most fabled names in the game, with a prestigious series of tournaments that was often described as the 'Wimbledon of Chess'.

His first tournaments in 1978 was a modest affair, but soon all the big names in the game craved a Linares invite, and Garry Kasparov – who announced his retirement there in 2005 – once observed that it was the tournament that would sort out 'just who was who for the coming year'.

Anatoly Karpov's 1994 Linares win with the unbelievable score of 11 out of 13 against the entire chess elite may well be the greatest tournament result ever.

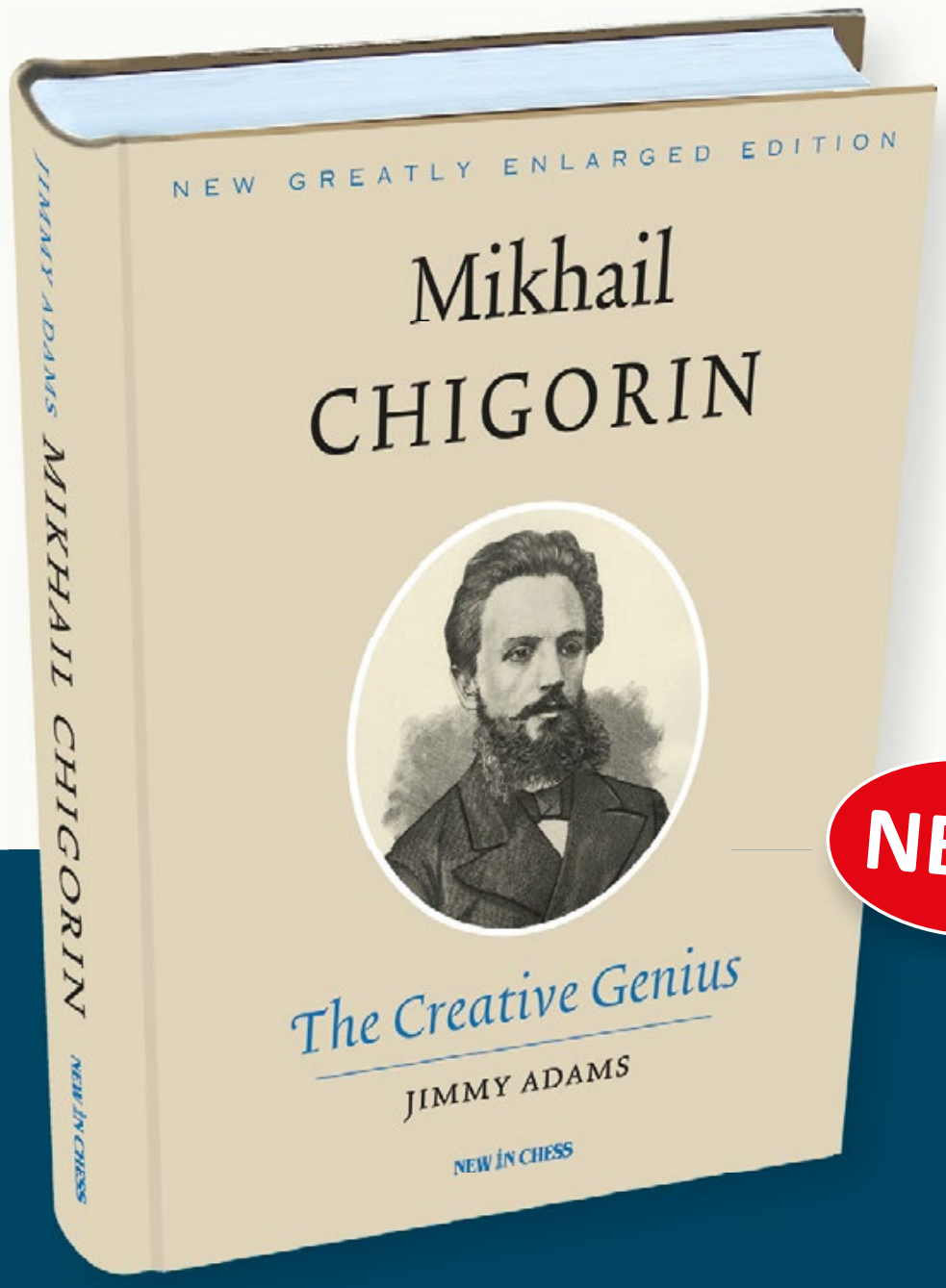
Rentero was a true character in every sense of the word. One of his particular pet peeves was the growing epidemic of 'grandmaster draws' in chess. Well before the Sofia Rules, he went about seeking his own form of retribution for those that didn't want to fight at the board, often including a combination of threats, bribery, boycotts and blackmail (sometimes all four of them!).

For the 1990 edition, Rentero had Boris Spassky – no stranger to a short day at the office – sign a contract that he would not offer

Luis Rentero, playing the game he dearly loved.

or accept a draw before move 40, a contract that the Russian soon had reason to regret. In the bar at the Hotel Anibal he went down on his knees and dramatically asked the bloodthirsty tournament director: 'What do you want? To kill me?' Luis Rentero's great gifts to 'the Golden Book of Chess' (one of his favourite phrases) will never be forgotten. ■

The father of Russian chess



NEW!

A vivid account of the life and times of Mikhail Ivanovich Chigorin: his rise to chess fame after a difficult childhood, his unfaltering commitment to the promotion of the game in 19th-century Russia, his friends and enemies, and his chess exploits in many countries.

This is the hugely expanded second edition of the games collection published in 1987. The biographical material, telling the story of Chigorin's turbulent chess career, now runs to hundreds of pages. Furthermore, 100 extra games have been added, annotated by Chigorin and his contemporaries or more modern grandmasters.

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Bobby Fischer

Helgi Olafsson's opening comment in his letter (New In Chess 2015/8), 'It is Bobby Fischer again. He refuses to go away', reminded me of an amusing conversation I had with a colleague who has no interest in chess whatsoever:
Him: 'I see you are interested in chess – Do you play?'
Me: 'Yes, to a certain incompetent level... have you heard of any chess players?'
Him: 'Yeah, I know of Bobby Fischer!, and that Russian guy, Spakksy (sic).'
Me: 'Great! ... do you know any modern-day players?'
Him: 'Oh yeah, that guy who beat the IBM Computer some years back.'
Me (mischievously): ' You must mean Kaprasarov (sic).'
Him: 'Yes, him!'

Fischer indeed refuses to go away, and is probably the only player that is universally still recognised, even by non-chess players. The recent film (*Pawn Sacrifice*) is testament to this. How many sportsmen have a film made about them? Only the truly stellar.

Srihari Iyengar
Amersham, UK

Dead Parrot

Sympathetic as I am with Nigel Short's complaints concerning illegal castling ('Sedated Sloths', New In Chess 2015/8), I still feel it is a minor infraction whether you castle with one hand, both hands or with your teeth. But the rule that roils me is the one in club chess in Britain that insists if player A, when his flag falls and he has thus lost the game, no one in the room can point this out except his opponent, player B. If player B is too distracted to notice, the game continues. Yes, if there's an arbiter in the room, which there never is, he can intervene. But otherwise the game goes on with player A clearly the victor until:
(1) Player B notices and claims victory,
(2) Player B also forfeits by having his flag fall and thus the game is a draw, or
(3) as once happened in a club match in which I was involved, someone naively calls out, 'A's flag has fallen!' whereupon the game is an automatic draw and player A is miraculously resurrected from the grave as in the Bible. But why, I ask you, can't any of the onlookers simply point out that A, sadly, is as deceased as the proverbial dead parrot? Then you wouldn't have the farce of a dead man sitting and still playing and with luck even drawing the game he has clearly and legally lost.

Leon Arden
London, UK

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Radbruch Formula

The article entitled 'Sedated Sloths' in New In Chess 2015/8 immediately caught my attention. Nigel hits the nail on the head when he questions himself about the meaning of *The Preface to the Laws of Chess*, which states that too detailed a rule might deprive the arbiter of his freedom of judgement. How is this principle to be interpreted? The author of the article points out very insightfully that it could open a door to arbitrary decision-making.

The discussed 'problem' is no stranger to legal philosophy. Basically it is a try to find the right measure between legal positivism and natural law, in the sense that too pedantic a view of positivism may lead to unjust or inhuman results, while natural law is – to put it in slightly simplified terms – hard to define and thus sometimes unpredictable. It goes without saying that 'justice' can be very subjective. In chess terms the discussed issue would mean that an arbiter is in a dilemma about whether to follow the rules of chess or to base his decision on his own sense of justice.

In legal philosophy one of the famous attempts to tackle this challenge is known as the Radbruch formula, according to which: 'a judge who encounters a conflict between a statute and what he perceives as just has to decide against applying the statute if – and only if – the legal concept behind the statute in question seems either "unbearably unjust" or in "deliberate disregard" of human equality before the law.'

There is one important detail that needs to be mentioned, though. While the Radbruch formula forces the judge to decide against applying the statute if the conditions are fulfilled, *The Preface to the Laws of Chess* lacks such a clear consequence. It only says that too detailed a rule can deprive the arbiter of his freedom of judgment. This finding, which is understandable by itself, does not put it explicitly that the arbiter shall not use this 'too detailed a rule'. Consequently, there is at least a doubt about whether such a formulation is binding – also because it occurs in *The Preface*, which often contains wishful thinking rather than concrete rules. The sentence 'FIDE appeals to all chess players and federations to accept this view' does not help to solve the problem at all.

Jan Gantar
Vodice, Slovenia

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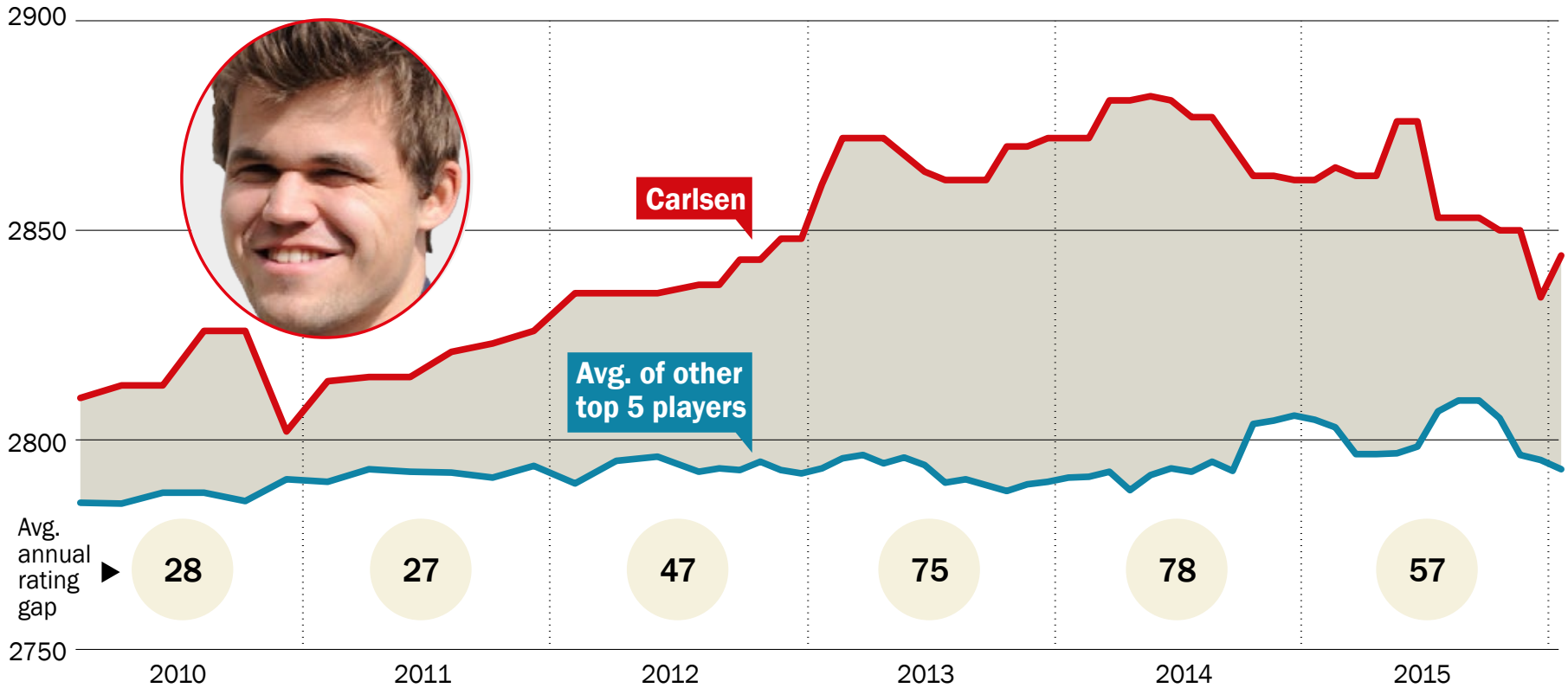
Infographic

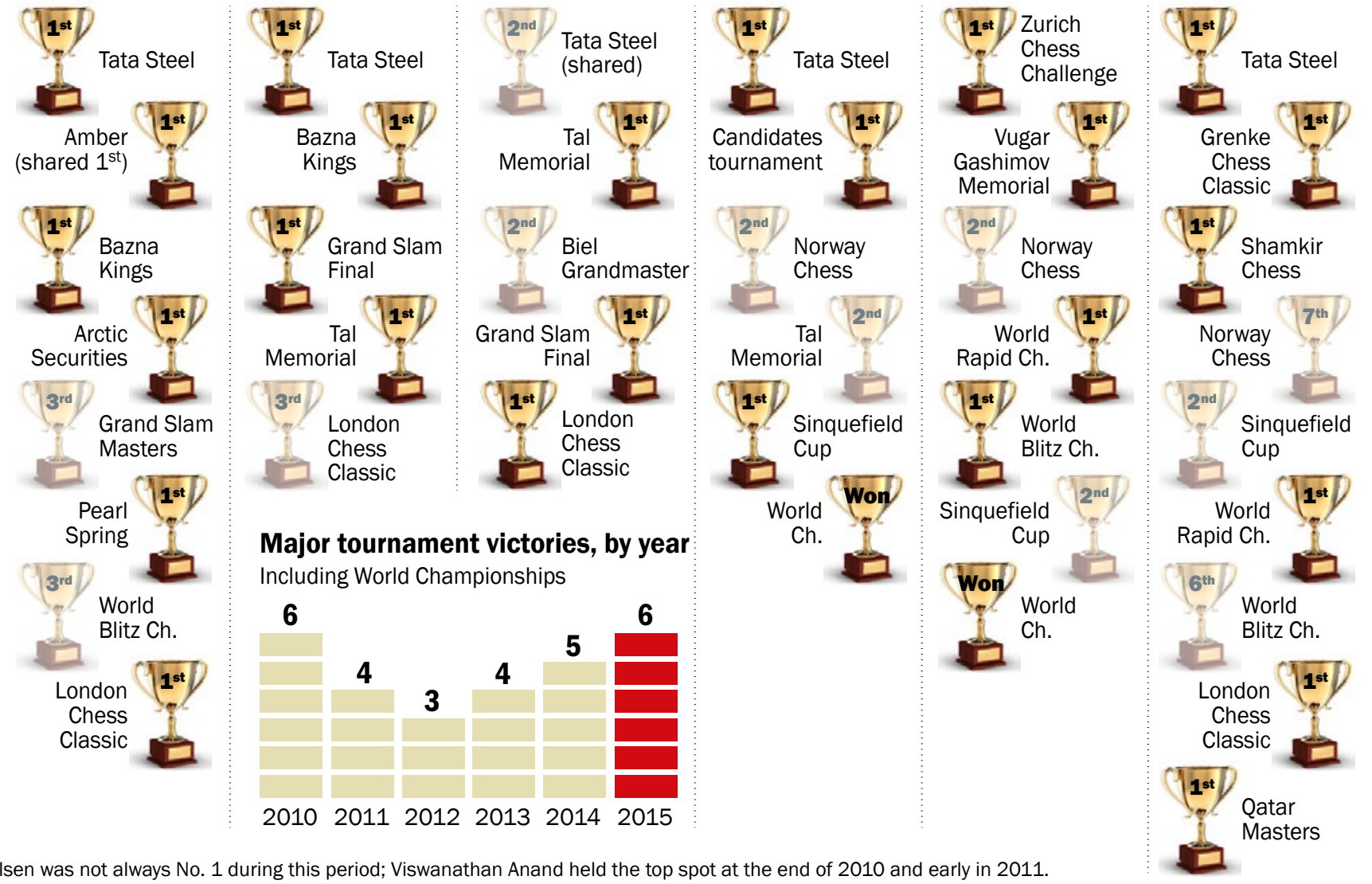
Carlsen's (Not so) Bad Year

After Magnus Carlsen won the London Chess Classic (and the Grand Chess Tour) and then the Qatar Masters Open in December, there was a perception that he had salvaged an off year -- that he had slipped a bit before those performances. That perception was fed by a decline in his rating during 2015, by a particularly poor result in the Norway Chess tournament, and by his failure to repeat as World Blitz Champion. But, even before December, it had not really been a bad year, even by the lofty standards that Carlsen has set. He had already won three major tournaments and repeated as World Rapid Champion. And though his rating had slipped, so had the ratings of most of his top rivals and the gap remained substantial. The graphic below looks at Carlsen's rating and results since 2010, when he first secured the No. 1 spot in the rankings. When viewed over that period of time, 2015 was a pretty good year. *DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN*

Rating gap between Carlsen and the average of the other top five players in the world*



Carlsen's results in major tournaments (excluding Olympiads)

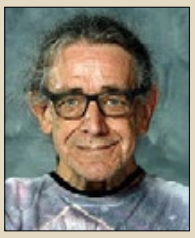


Major tournament victories, by year

Including World Championships

*Carlsen was not always No. 1 during this period; Viswanathan Anand held the top spot at the end of 2010 and early in 2011.

Fair & Square



Peter Mayhew: 'Never having played Chess before, it was most interesting to be playing the game with no pieces in front of me. But I still knew how to stroke my hair when I won.'
(As The Force Awakens with a new cinema adventure, this is what the 'Chewbacca' actor wrote about playing R2-D2 during a holographic chess game in the original Star Wars movie)

Maurice Ashley: '[Chess can be a] real tool in the toolbox for teachers and administrators who are trying to help make a change in the community... it's kind of this interesting discipline that's masking as a game.'
(Launching a chess-in-schools program in the troubled Ferguson district in St. Louis)

Jackie Thompson: 'It's like the most complex game of chess... ever.'
(The senior Accident & Emergency matron, on managing her team of nurses and healthcare assistants during a winter crisis)

Tiger Woods: 'There are more physically demanding sports, obviously, but the mental task of golf is hard. It is basically a physical chess match.'

Patrice Evra: 'Here in Italy, it is more like a chess game – you have to think about every move.'
(The former Manchester United defender, now playing for Juventus)

Sir Terry Pratchett: 'He hated games, they made the world look too simple. Chess, in particular, had always annoyed him. It was the dumb way the pawns went off and slaughtered their fellow pawns while the king lounged about doing nothing. If only the pawns would've united... the whole board could've been a republic in about a dozen moves.'
(The fantasy novelist, from his book 'Thud!')

Ken Smith: 'Until you are at least a high class A player, your first name is "Tactics", your middle name is "Tactics", and your last name is "Tactics".'

David Bronstein: 'Tal develops all his pieces in the centre and then sacrifices them somewhere.'

Noam Chomsky: 'Chess is an example of something that is just beyond human mental abilities, but not so far beyond them that we cannot make a decent stab at it. We're very good at language, no better than rats at mazes, and somewhere in between at chess.'

Lev Alburt: 'The older the player, the greater the odds his idol is Lasker!'

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar: 'Daring ideas are like chessmen... but one man cannot make a team.'
(The record-breaking retired basketball superstar who became a successful author)

Donald McLean: 'Take these pieces, set them in their rank and file upon an 8 x 8 magic square and you have the recipe for endless centuries of romance and intrigue.'
(Canadian chess teacher/coach)

Magnus Carlsen: 'Probably Bobby Fischer at his best. Because the precision and energy that he played with is just unmatched in the history of chess. So Bobby Fischer from 1970 to 1972.'
(During a Q&A session hosted online by CNN for ordinary chess fans, when asked 'If you could play one of all the players in history, who would you play?')

Akiba Rubinstein: 'Tonight, I am playing against the Black pieces.'
(On being asked who his opponent was)

Anne Brontë: 'Chess-players are so unsociable, they are no company for any but themselves.'
(The English novelist, poet and youngest member of the literary Brontë brood)

Robert Morrell: 'Indeed, the most persuasive argument against sudden-death time controls is that it seems to mimic the world epidemic of attention-deficit disorder.'
(California Chess Journal)

Yasser Seirawan: 'It isn't important what comes off the board, but what stays on!'

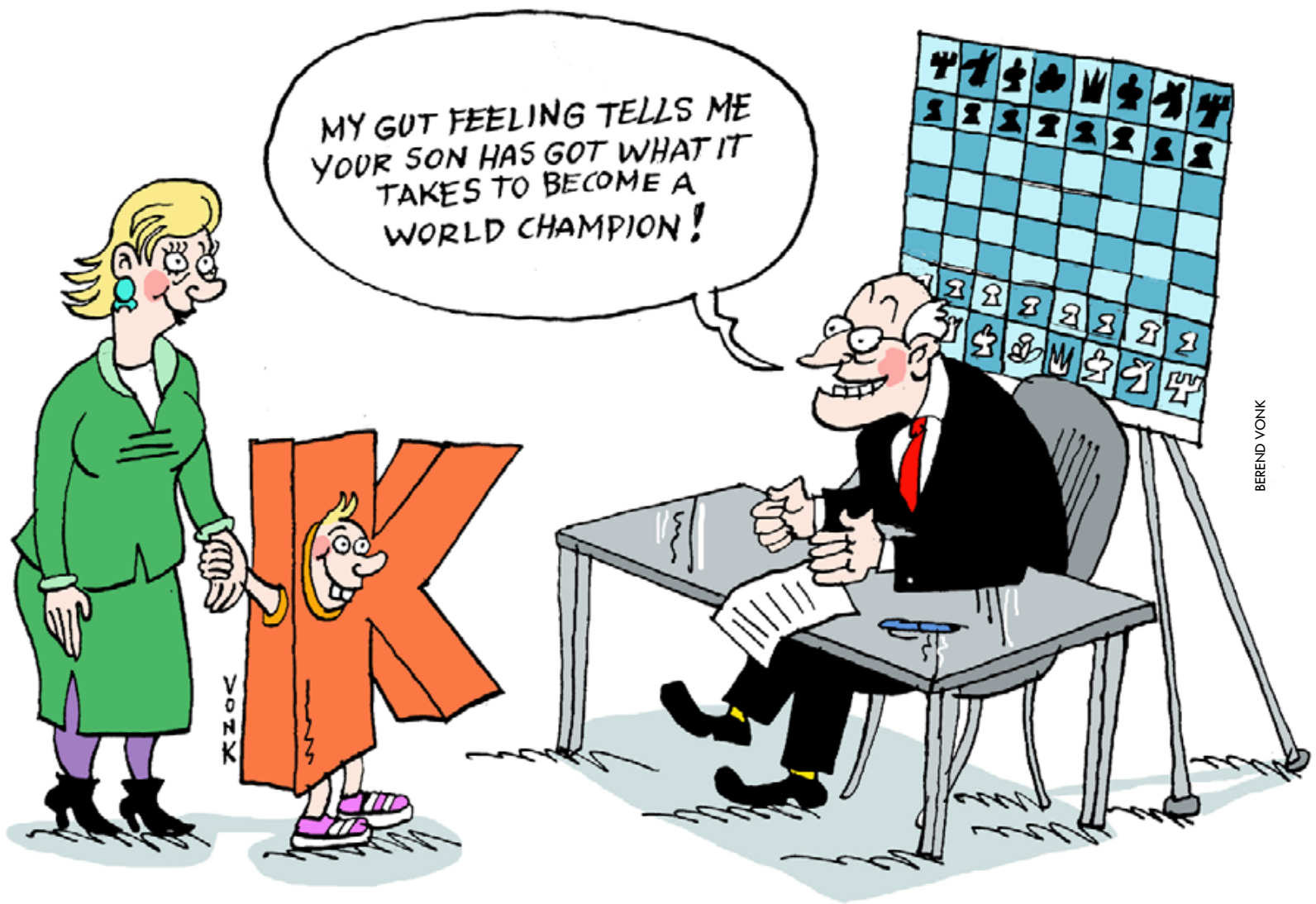
Frank J. Marshall: 'The life of a chess champion is short. I feel I am shortening my life by sticking at the game. I've long wanted to quit. But there's a fascination that holds me.'

Marc Lowrance: 'No fool can play chess, and only fools do.'
(The American former sports anchor and World Wrestling commentator)

The K Factor

Who are the favourites to challenge Carlsen?

Coming March, in Moscow, eight Candidates will fight for the right to play the World Champion in a match next autumn. In an incisive and candid preview, **SERGEY SHIPOV** believes that an old trend will continue.



When I entered the Moscow University Physics Faculty in 1983 there were six applicants for every place. I succeeded in gaining admittance, which had a disastrous effect on my chess career.

In the Candidates' Tournament in March the competition will be even fiercer. For all the participants even second place will be a defeat. Only sole victory has any point! And from the career standpoint this is the main chance of their life. Only Anand and Topalov can feel calm, since they have already played matches for the title, whereas the other contestants can merely repeat their achievement.

In general, a Candidates' Tournament cannot be compared even with the most prestigious super-tournament. The atmosphere is completely different! In the battle for the right to play a championship match there is no place for good humour, there is no right to play to the gallery, and there is no possibility of gaining pleasure from a game. His Majesty the result presses on all the players with terrible force. And even previous friends are transformed into wolves.

The composition of the tournament is quite even, and to pick out the obvious favourites (as well as the outsiders) is difficult. But I will try...

The general prognosis is this: the one who qualifies for a meeting with Carlsen will be a player of his generation, much younger than Anand. Youth should, at last, make its mark.

You would like a more concrete explanation? By all means.

I grew up, studied and worked in those times when the K letter was dominant. In the forefront were Karpov, Kortchnoi, Kasparov and Kramnik. Then came a slight break, transition years, a discordance of letters. This happens – no one tendency can last for ever... But then came Carlsen (the writing of his name cannot conceal that the fact that the first letter sounds like a K) and order was restored.

You can regard me as an old grumbler, a hostage to superstition and tradition (apart from the names mentioned I respect Keres and idolize Capablanca), but in my view the tendency will be continued – the next World Champion will definitely be a player from the K group. Of course, this result may be ensured by Magnus himself, by winning the match, but for safety's sake he needs an opponent from the same group: Karjakin or Caruana. And they are the main favourites in the Candidates' Tournament.

I realize that, apart from mysticism and lyricism, objective factors explaining this choice are also needed. Let us look at each contestant individually, and weigh up his chances.

Vishy Anand

India

46 years old – 2784

I think that the Maestro will be unable again to rise to the top. The reason is not only his age (Vishy has already demonstrated that years for him are of no significance), and not the strength of his rivals (among them there is no young Kasparov), but his motivation.

Ask yourself a very important question: does Anand want to play a match with Carlsen for a third time in succession? Of course, he would be glad to again earn an inordinate sum of money, but to play chess with someone who has already beaten him twice? – hardly. I don't think that Vishy has any illusions regarding their relative strengths. Magnus is clearly stronger, and time is on his side. An understanding of this sad reality may depress the will of the ex-World Champion, and weaken his fighting qualities and motivation.

A second important factor is the serious attitude on the part of his rivals. Before the previous Candidates' Tournament many commentators asserted that anyone could finish first, only not Anand. Years of colourless performances had created the illusion of the Indian being pensioned off. They effectively 'buried' him, and considered him incapable of new feats. I think that this assessment also told on the competitive battle in Khanty-Mansiysk.

On this occasion even the young and arrogant youngsters will treat the great player with due respect. They will give 100% against him and will not overstep the mark.

In this new tournament I expect solid and high-quality play from Vishy. He may personally determine the champion's opponent, but he himself will miss out.

Veselin Topalov

Bulgaria

40 years old – 2780

A player of unlimited possibilities. He plays either brilliantly, or ignominiously: from 3000 to 2600. The range of his playing strength is extremely wide, with no stability. Veselin can win one tournament without any

chances for his opponents, but in another (with the same line-up) he can finish last.

For me these are essentially grounds for refusing to predict his performance. But I will try to focus on the main thing: Topalov has no real chances of being first.

Firstly, his lack of stability can also display itself during the course of a tournament. At some point a slump in his play will certainly occur, since 14 rounds is a long tournament.

The second factor to some extent explains the first – age. Topalov has an energy-consuming and concrete style of play. He calculates a great deal, and for this a large reserve of joules is required. Anand can play by sight, intuitively – and almost certainly produce a high-quality decision. The Bulgarian grandmaster does not possess this gift to a sufficient degree. Hence his serious mistakes caused by fatigue.

On the other hand, Veselin has far greater ambition than Vishy. He has not yet played a match with Carlsen. He has the stimulus to try and summon all his remaining strength (and even slightly more) for an upward surge.

Peter Svidler

Russia

39 years old – 2751

In recent times his play has lacked stability, and only occasionally does he recall the past.

Oh, but how well Peter played in the last World Cup! And he practically had victory in his grasp. But in some mystical way he threw it away. What hindered him? What was the reason?

I think that it was a matter of Svidler's nervous system and mental features. The anticipation of success is a strong test. Even people with nerves of steel sometimes go wrong in such a situation. But Peter's are not made of steel. And besides... He constantly engages in self-irony, which, in my view, is very harmful from the karma point of view. It creates a kind of ceiling, which you cannot breach, however hard you try.

> 'With pain in my heart I exclude the three oldest contestants from the list of possible winners.'

Svidler outplays grandmasters of the second echelon easily and without effort, and in such play 'from on high' his talent is fully revealed. But in battles with elite players, whom Peter respects immeasurably, and also when lofty summits are beckoning, the easiness of his play is lost. And, probably, superfluous thoughts creep into his mind. Even a small drop of uncertainty in your strength, even a tiny bit of self-reproach is sufficient to deprive you of stability. And if you have them in such doses as Svidler...

Perhaps this is why he has not acquired the habit of winning supertournaments, although he has played in several dozen. Why he has not exploited his chances in Candidates' and championship tournaments.

In recent years Svidler has altogether fallen out of the elite cohort, which migrates from city to city. It has happened that for several months at a time he has not had any strong tournaments. In such a situation the quality of your play declines, and your attacking and resistance strength are lowered.

And then there is his age... Yes, until July 2016 the number of years lived by Peter will not yet look frightening. But however you look at it, his best years are behind him. And if then he was unable to break through to the top, why should he be able to now?

Of course, Gelfand will laugh at these arguments of mine. But I will nevertheless insist on them. The success of Boris Abramovich was that exception which confirms the general rule.

I hope and even believe that Svidler will perform worthily in the tournament. But that he will win it – no.

And so, with pain in my heart I exclude the three oldest contestants from the list of possible winners. I think that Carlsen's future opponent will be one of the five younger players. Let's look at them in more detail.

Sergey Karjakin

Russia

26 years old – 2769

A serious fighter with hardly any weak points. He is able to compose himself at critical moments, and he is able to motivate himself for the most important games and tournaments. And also he has matured.

In the last Candidates' Tournament Sergey was also close to success. After a poor start he composed himself and with a sharp spurt he almost caught the leader, Anand. For success all that Karjakin lacked was a couple of accurate moves in their individual encounter one round before the end. To finish second in a tournament of such standard is already an historic achievement (remember Keres), but I was left with the distinct feeling that for Sergey this is not the limit.

In the intervening time the Russian experienced a serious slump; at one point it was even painful to look at him (for example, in the Russian Championship, Kazan 2014), and I am even ashamed to say that I thought marriage had ruined another chess player. ☺

But no! Sergey emerged with honour from the crisis. The trials made him stronger. He has never stopped working seriously on chess. He has been patient, patient, patient...

Now in Karjakin one senses a reserve of solidity. He has become a strong man, a father and a fighter.

Now Fortune loves him as strongly as before. Apart from incredible luck in the final of the World Cup one can also remember other episodes in Sergey's career. For example, his 'mass' victory over all the Chinese players, when in some games a loss was more probable than a win.

But, as is well known, the one who is lucky is always the strongest player. The one who really is ready to become this. The one who believes in himself. In general, Karjakin has chances. It is all in his hands.

Fabiano Caruana

USA

23 years old – 2787

A year ago I would undoubtedly have named him as the main favourite for the new Candidates' Tournament, being in no doubt that he would qualify for it. But now all is not so simple. Fabiano's results have declined, and his rivals have become stronger...

And yet, by analogy with Karjakin's situation, I believe in a new and even higher surge by Caruana. The Italian's period of relative failure is bound to come to an end. He has already become an experienced fighter, going through not only fire and water, but also much more (precisely at the end of last year).

Caruana's main virtue is his devilish industriousness. As far as I know, he has assembled a powerful team of helpers (the world is full of rumours), so his preparation should be at a very high level. The main thing is that Fabiano should not over-train, and should not overestimate his strength. A week of high-quality relaxation before the tournament in accordance with Botvinnik's method, i.e. completely without chess – and he will have a serious chance of repeating the achievement of his great predecessor.

Both mentally, and as regards chess mastery, Caruana is ready to fight for the title. He has beaten the Champion several times, he has won numerous super-tournaments, his prestige in the chess world is high. All that remains is to demonstrate his strength once more in the Candidates'.

Hikaru Nakamura

USA

28 years old – 2787

This is the dark horse, the third favourite.

2015 was the most successful year in Hikaru's career. He demonstrated genuinely mature and stable play. Personally I would place him second on the year's results after the World Champion. A better moment for a tilt at the title cannot be imagined. If not now, then when? The American's age is not yet critical, of course, but also he no longer has a great number of years in reserve. Now is the time!

True, there is one unpleasant factor... Like Anand, it is unlikely that Nakamura is burning with desire to play against Carlsen. The score in their individual meetings is just so bad. It's either 11-0 or 12... Therefore on the level of Hikaru's sub-conscious, for all his boldness and fighting spirit, he will be afraid of a new meeting with the leader of modern chess.

I am in no doubt that at the level of conscious desires Nakamura very much wants to qualify for a title match and break the unpleasant tradition of defeats, but his organism, his previous wounds received in battles with Carlsen, will be remembered. Objecting slightly...

However, this negative factor should not be over-dramatized, since history recalls examples of the transformation of challengers, who earlier could not compete with the champion. The most vivid of these is Alekhine, who before the 1927 match could do nothing to oppose Capablanca.

In general, Nakamura should adopt the example of the fourth World Champion. He must demonstrate Alekhine's character!

Anish Giri

The Netherlands

21 years old, 2798

For the moment the young grandmaster's career is progressing ideally. His successes are following a rising trajectory, one even somewhat ahead of my bold expectations (everyone may have his opinion on this).

By his mentality and amazing ease of play, Giri reminds me of the young Anand, and they are even outwardly somewhat similar. Anish plays economically and solidly, without visible effort and very successfully... This is all very good, but the question arises: is he capable of extreme effort? Without this you cannot become either the champion, or the challenger to the title.

Being the only one and the best, and being simply successful and stable – these are different psychological situations. Different feelings. In order to climb higher than everyone, at some point something special has to be accomplished. You have to master yourself. For example, save that which cannot be saved. Withstand extreme pressure. Win a decisive game. And so on.

The reason for my fears is obvious: Anish does not win super-tournaments. We don't count Dutch Championships, since they are of a different level. But in elite events Giri takes one of the prize places, regularly scores more than 50%, but, alas, does not finish first. And this is what will have to be done in Moscow in March.

Can the Russian Dutchman reorganize himself psychologically and rise above himself precisely in his first Candidates' Tournament, where apart from a very strong line-up there

is also special responsibility? This would resemble a fairy-tale. I don't believe it!

I think that it is still too early for Anish to win such celestial tournaments. Although they have become juicy, the grapes are sour. He still needs time to mature.

Incidentally, this creates... an excellent psychological background for Giri. He can repeat the phrase of the young Karpov, 'This is not my cycle!', and calmly play chess. Then there will be a chance of refuting my prognosis.

There is one more subjective factor in favour of Giri's unexpected ascent – Tukmakov. It is unlikely that he is intending to await success for many years; he does not have them. It is Vladimir Borisovich with his strong and forceful character who is capable of giving his pupil a winning impulse.

We will see in March...

Levon Aronian

Armenia

33 years old – 2792

As is well known, a player included in a tournament at the last moment is always lucky. And it is also said that God loves the number three. So let us see how Levon plays in his third Candidates' Tournament. He did not shine last year, and only in Saint Louis did he display his real, truly celestial level.

I think that this slump may prove useful for Aronian (it would appear that this motif has become the recurrent theme of my article!). In the two preceding Candidates' battles he was unable to withstand the tension, and at some point he cracked up. But in recent times, being in the shadow of the other players, Levon has preserved his nervous system, avoiding excessive strain. He is still a young man, so that during these couple of years he has probably accumulated a fair reserve of nervous energy, which will help him in Moscow.

Can Aronian be considered one of the favourites? I would refrain from such an assessment. I also appeal to all his faithful supporters, of whom there are far more than the inhabitants of Armenia. The fewer the hopes placed on Levon, the easier it will be for him to play.

And how well he can play in the capacity of a free artist (especially when he is emotionally inspired) is known by the whole world. And also by the champion.

■ ■ ■

We impatiently await the tournament! I hope that it will present us with an interesting competitive scenario... and many surprises, which later will force us to remember this article with a smile and to speak the hackneyed phrase: 'Man proposes, but God disposes'. ■

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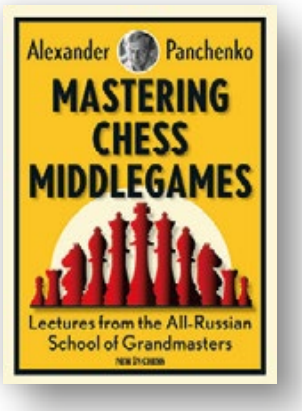

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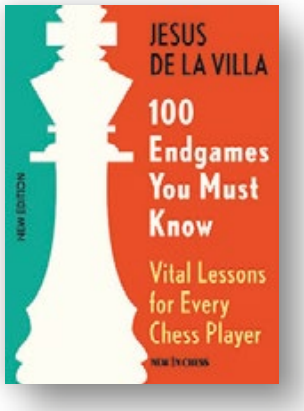

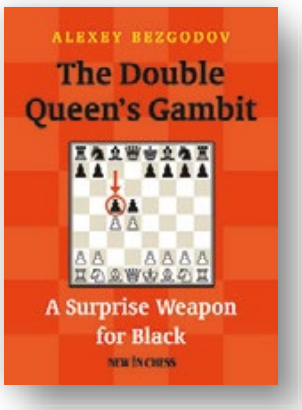

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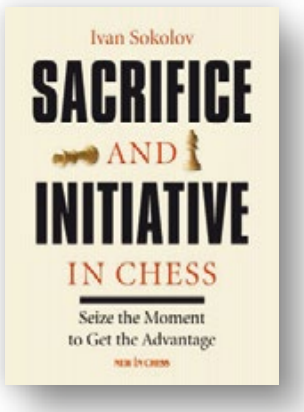

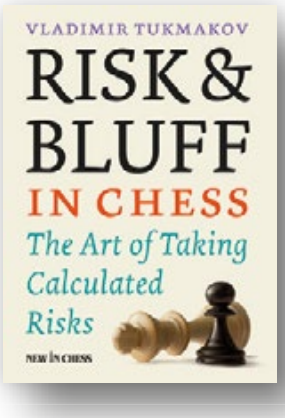

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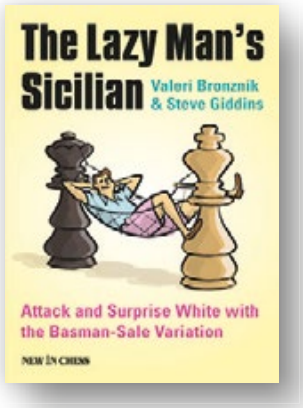

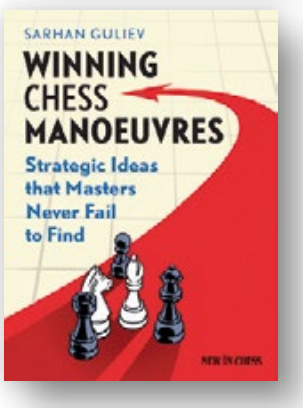

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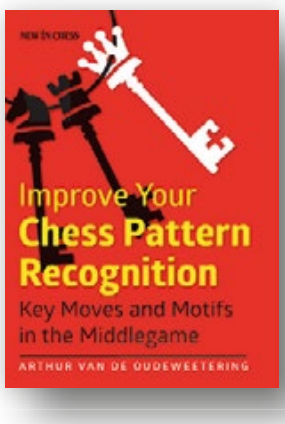

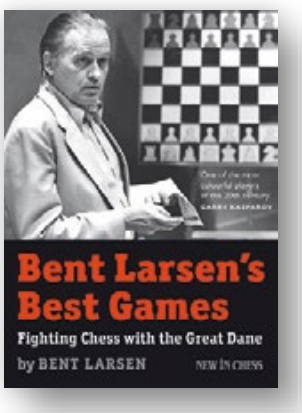

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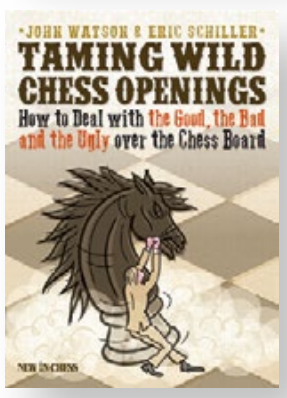

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He doesn't mingle with the hoi polloi too often, but lured by a fresh new challenge, balmy temperatures and a majestic hotel suite, Magnus Carlsen happily accepted the invitation to play in the second Qatar Masters Open. After a wobbly start the World Champion gathered steam and triumphed by defeating last year's sensational winner, Yu Yangyi, in the tie-break. **ANISH GIRI** reports.

Magnus out in the open

A desert is not the first destination that comes to mind when you are brainstorming where to celebrate Christmas, but it was an impressive bunch of strong chess players that travelled to Doha to stay in luxurious 5-star hotels over the Christmas holidays. The reason was, obviously, the Qatar Masters, one of the strongest (and youngest!) Opens in history. For their second edition, the organizers, led by Qatari GM Mohamed Al-Modiahki, had managed to assemble an incredible field of strong GM's and future hopes. The top-seeds actually turned out to be the world's Top 3 in the live ratings, with, besides World Champion Magnus Carlsen and his predecessor Vladimir Kramnik, yours truly as the proud third member. The future was represented by prodigies from all over the world, as always over-represented by the Indians and the Chinese, and they didn't disappoint. But, inevitably, a lot of attention was focused on the World Champion, who shocked the chess world by agreeing to participate in an Open. This was the first time since Boris Spassky played in the Canadian Open Championship back in 1971(!) that a World Champion deigned to take part in an Open, although we should add that the Qatar Masters Open boasted a far stronger field.

Not much can be said about the organization, other than that it was splendid, and that the event was run very smoothly. There were classy details such as Bentley cars that were always available to drive you to the destination of your need, a spacious carpeted playing hall, and separate tables for all encounters, luxuries that cannot be taken for granted in a big Open.

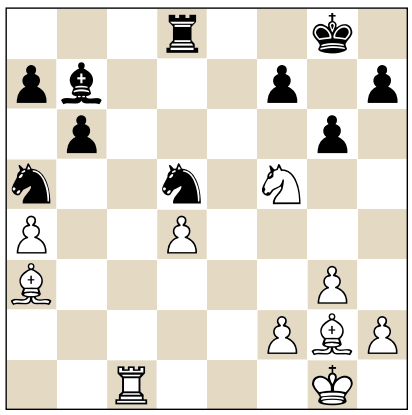
Every participant was excited to take part and I was no exception. Together with my Miss Tactics, I arrived a couple of days before the event, but the days went by quickly in anticipation of the chess to start. Perhaps spending time in the beautiful swimming pool of the Torch hotel

MARIA EMELIANOVA

He had some privileges, such as playing all his games at the same table, but for the rest Magnus Carlsen was one of the boys and girls in the Qatar Masters Open.

contributed to my good mood as well, but let's not go into the details of my private leisure time and stick to the excitement on the chess board.

As could be expected, some of the favourites failed to avoid the bitterness of the Open tournament format in the very first round. I was about to stumble, but got lucky. Magnus Carlsen didn't.

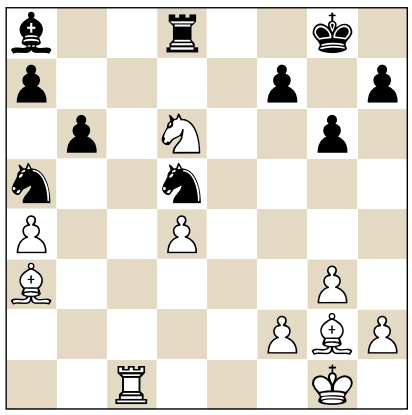


Carlsen-Batsiashvili
Doha 2015 (1)
position after 24...g6

25.♘d6!

I saw the position at this point, and by the look on Nino's face I figured she had missed this move. Now Black's position doesn't look very pleasant.

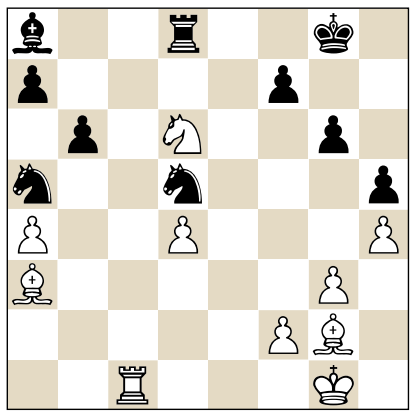
25...♗a8



26.h4?!

One way to cash in was 26.♖c8!?, but White was obviously very concerned about the drawing tendencies of the ensuing endgame, even though he is a pawn up: 26...♖xc8 27.♘xc8 ♗b7 (after 27...♘c4 28.♗c1! not only is the a7-pawn under attack, but there is also the threat of ♗xd5, followed by a very cheap fork, ♘e7+) 28.♘xa7 ♘c3 29.♗b4! ♘xa4 (29...♘e2+ 30.♔f1 ♗xg2+ 31.♔xg2 ♘xd4 32.♘c8! wins the very important pawn and I think eventually the game as well: 32...♘c4 33.♘e7+! ♔g7 34.♗c3 ♔f8 35.♘xg6+ fxg6 36.♗xd4, and with queenside pawns still on the board, Black's chances to draw this position are probably non-existent) 30.♗xa5 ♗xg2 31.♔xg2 bxa5 32.♘c6. These variations are within Magnus' abilities and if he had beaten someone like Nakamura this way, nobody would have been surprised. Against a much weaker player, though, he decided to maintain the tension, waiting to get more.

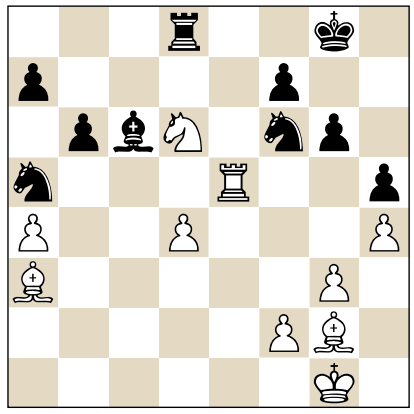
26...h5



27.♖e1 White does not have many useful moves and it's really time to cash in. Magnus goes for the wrong pawn, but he does so in order to keep the rooks on the board, an obsession he will regret quite soon.

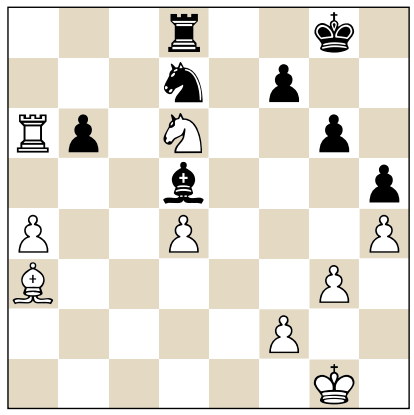
Now, surprisingly enough, 27.♖c8 is actually quite different: 27...♖xc8 28.♘xc8 ♗b7 29.♘xa7 ♘c3 30.♗xb7 ♘xb7 31.♘b5 ♘xa4 and 32.♔f1 is the way here once again, using the fact that the knight on a4 is practically trapped.

27...♗c6! 28.♖e5 ♘f6



29.♖xa5 The point, but the d4-pawn will be so nicely blocked by the monster bishop on d5 that White's advantage is ephemeral.

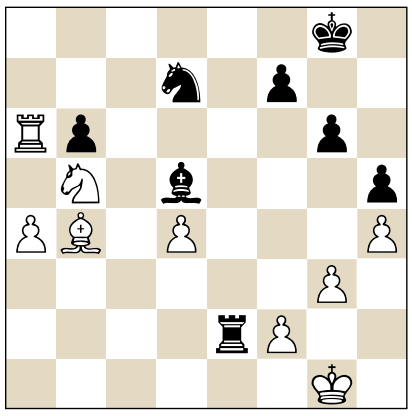
29...♗xg2 30.♖xa7 ♗d5 31.♖a6 ♘d7?!



MARIA EMELIANOVA

Chess and Qatar: 'There were classy details such as Bentley cars that were always available to drive you to the destination of your need.'

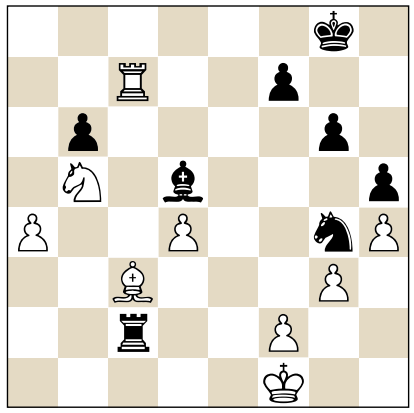
32.♘b5?
Magnus was hoping that Nino would be focused on the idea of ♖a8, but in fact she easily sensed the lack of coordination in White's camp.
32.♔f1 ♖a8 33.♖xa8+ ♗xa8 34.♔e2 would leave White on the right side of the game. True, the drawing chances for Black are enormous, but it's in a position like this that the difference in class usually tells.
32...♖e8! 33.♗b4 ♖e2



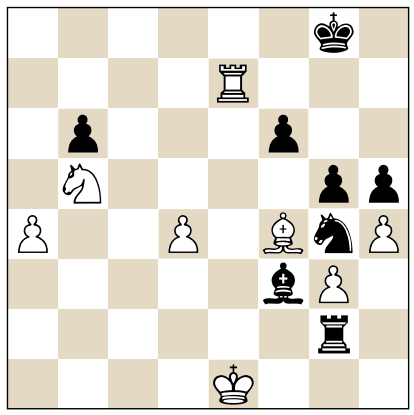
Seeing this position and the clock situation, with Magnus being down to seconds, I misread the situation and thought that Black already had some advantage. In fact, it wasn't so dramatic, and after a few decent moves White escapes the danger.

'I must say that I personally don't understand what some of Carlsen's opponents were thinking about when preparing for their games.'

34.♖a7 ♘f6 35.♔f1 ♖b2
Black has an alternative, but she played in the most natural way.
36.♗c3 ♖c2 37.♖c7 ♘g4



38.♔e1! This is the key move; now the position is equal.
38...♖xf2 39.♖c8+ ♔h7 40.♖d8 ♗f3 41.♖e8 f6 42.♖e7+ ♔g8 43.♖e8+ ♔h7 44.♖e7+ ♔g8 45.♗d2 ♖g2 46.♗f4 g5!? From now on Nino decided to force matters and achieved the draw confidently.



47.hxg5 fxg5 48.♗xg5 ♖xg3 49.♘c3 ♗c6 50.♔d2 ♖g2+ 51.♖e2 ♘f2!? 52.d5 ♗xd5! 53.♘xd5 ♘e4+ 54.♔e3 ♖xe2+ 55.♔xe2 ♘xg5 56.♘xb6 ♘e6 57.a5 ♘c7 Draw agreed. In a way I can understand what went wrong here for the first seed, but still a very freak occurrence no doubt.

This, however, didn't affect the situation much. After getting extremely lucky in the second round against the Indian prodigy Aravindh Chithambaram, the World Champion started rolling. I must say that I personally don't understand what some of his opponents were thinking about when preparing for their games, but then again, perhaps it was a matter of the right opening choice and just that little bit of winner's luck that the champ needed.

His best game he played in Round 5.

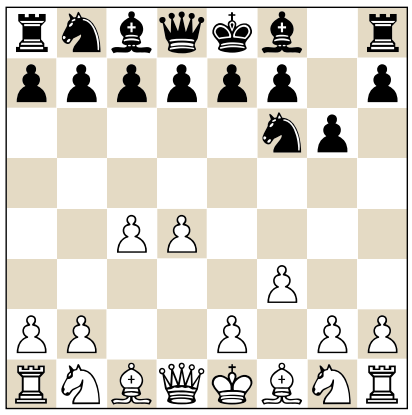
KATERINA SAVINA

The dreams that come true in Opens. In the first round Nino Batsiashvili (2498) confidently held Magnus Carlsen (2834) to a draw.

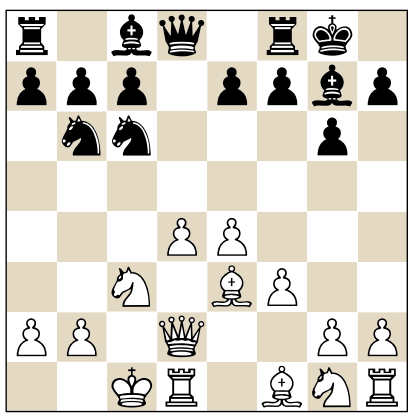
NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

GI 1.1 – D70
Magnus Carlsen
Li Chao
Doha 2015 (5)

The World Champion's return to open tournaments saw a rough start, but by Round 5 he had found his stride, and on Christmas Eve he provided excellent entertainment for all those kids waiting for the night to come– and for all other chess-lovers.
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3!?

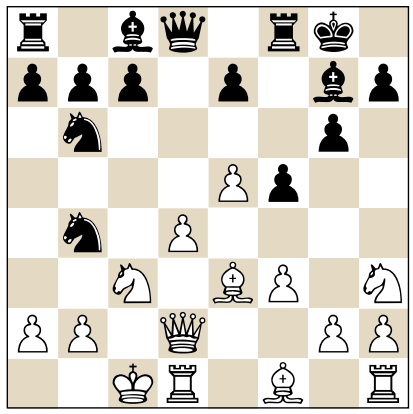


A move that has often been in the limelight the last couple of years, but somehow the interest seems to have faded a bit, for no apparent reason except fashion.
3...d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2 ♘c6 9.0-0-0

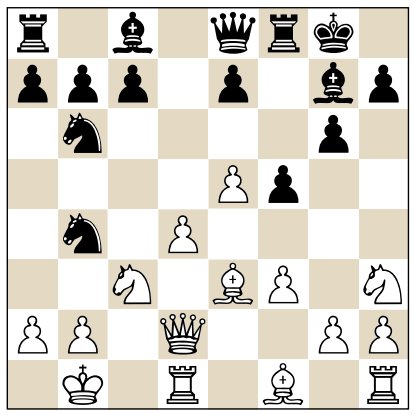


9...f5 9...♕d6 has established itself as the main line and is what Caruana played against Magnus in Norway Chess 2014. But Li stays true to his favourite choice.

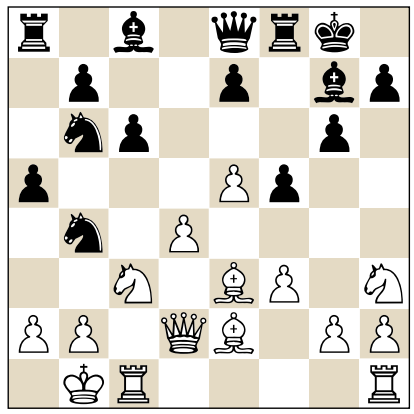
10.e5 ♘b4 11.♘h3



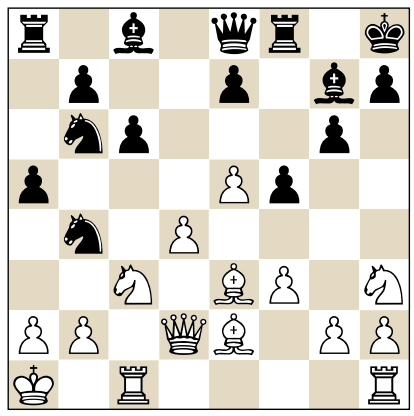
11...♕e8!? Here, however, Li springs his surprise, just before Magnus had the chance to show how he was going to proceed after Li's usual 11..a5. The text-move has the queen eyeing the f7-square to attack a2, but also introduces ideas like ...♘a4 to exchange an important defender of both the queenside and the d5-square. Magnus, almost in Grischuk-like fashion, plunged into a deep thought, trying to grasp the subtleties of Li's novelty.
12.♔b1



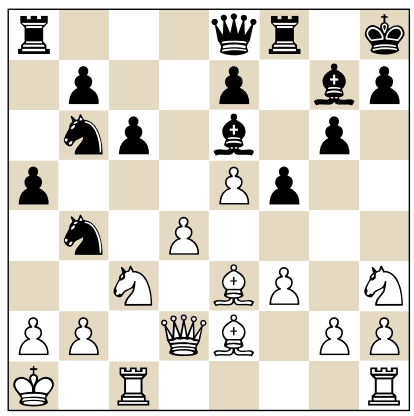
12...a5
Black switches back to this move, the point of 12.♔b1 being that 12...♕f7 could now be met by 13.♘g5!, and 13...♘xa2 is no longer check. In a way this position is a 'mini zugzwang', in the sense that White would love to play ♘f4 and h4, with a complete grip, but Black's concept with ...♕e8 means that ♘f4 can be met strongly by ...g5!, as h5 is protected. Thus Black does not want to play ...♗e6, as this would allow ♘f4 and h4. So both players bide their time, while making small improvements in their position.
13.♗e2 c6 14.♖c1



14...♔h8?! A logical move, often seen in the Leningrad Dutch, freeing the g8-square for the black bishop, but in hindsight it is easy to see that the king is very vulnerable on the h-file. 14...♗e6, straightaway seems preferable, even though 15.♘g5!? still seems to yield White a promising position.
15.♔a1!



One could make the same argument here in reverse, saying that the white king is vulnerable due to the impending attack on the a-file, but there is a major difference. This is partly because there is no white pawn on b3, so the immediate ...a4 is harmless, but it becomes especially relevant in the game that ...♗xa2 is no longer check.
15...♗e6

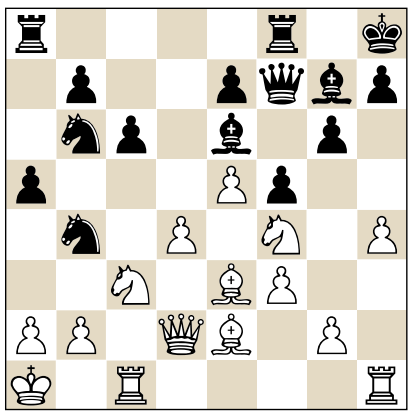


16.♘f4

Without the inclusion of 14...♔h8 15.♔a1, 16.♘g5 would have been the move here, but now it fails to 16...♘c4!, since 17.♕e1?? runs into 17...♘xe3, when 18.♘xe6 is met by a deadly fork on c2, as the king is now on a1.

16...♕f7 17.h4!

Exploiting the situation to the maximum by attacking the black king and not caring about a mere pawn.



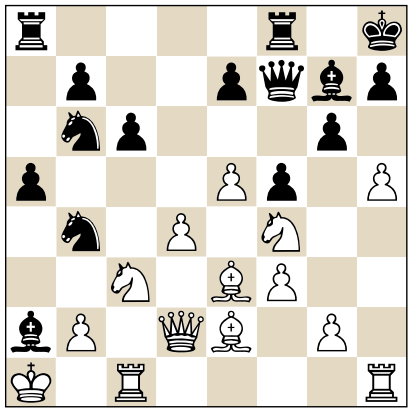
DAVID LLADA

He wasn't a member of the Chinese teams that won the Olympiad or the World Teams, but with his 2750 rating Li Chao is China's second player in the world rankings.

17...♗xa2?!

A very principled move. 17...♖fd8 still seemed very decent, as the threat of 18...♗xe5 slows White down somewhat. The straightforward 18.h5 g5 19.♘g6+ ♔g8 leads nowhere, and 18.♘xe6 ♕xe6 19.f4 h5! leaves the position too blocked for White's liking.

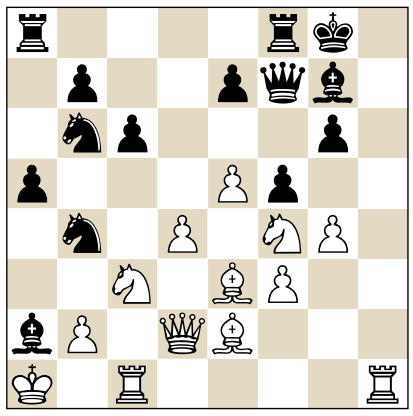
18.h5



18...♔g8

Of course this can be seen as an admission that move 14 was wrong, but Black will claim that he has won the a2-pawn, and White will have to play energetically to prove Black's concept wrong.

19.hxg6 hxg6 20.g4



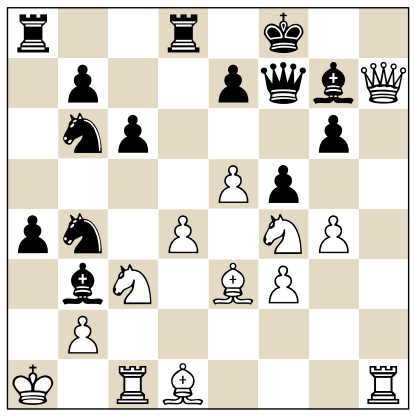
20...♗b3! Necessary, as 20...a4 21.gxf5 a3 is met by the simple 22.b3!, when Black's attack is far too late, despite his winning the white queenside pawns. But now, should the black pawn reach a3, his threats are deadly, so Magnus has to act decisively.

21.♗d1!

White wants to get his queen to h2 as soon as possible to create mating threats, maximizing the pressure on Black's position, exploiting the fact that the bishop on b3 is vulnerable, which is more than Black's position can bear.

There was another move, actually, with a lot of logic to it. As White wants his queen to go to h2, while slowing down Black's attack, 21.♗a6!? comes to mind. And indeed, after some time the computers show that White is completely winning!

21...a4 22.♕h2 ♖fd8 23.♕h7+ ♔f8



24.d5

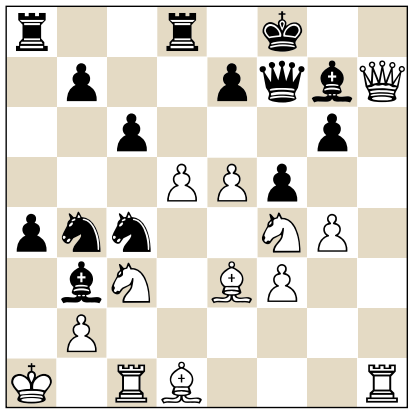
A good move, attacking the knight on b6, and if a knight takes on d5, allowing 25.e6.

However, 24.gxf5!? might have been a simpler win, even though 'simple' may not be a very accurate way of putting it. The point is that after 24...gxf5 the counterintuitive 25.♗xb3! axb3+ 26.♔b1 is completely winning for White, as his attack comes first. The

main point is 26...♖a5 27.♖cg1 ♖da8, and now 28.♕h8+!, exploiting the fact that the g-file has been opened, wins on the spot. 24...a3 won't work either, as 25.♗xb3 ♕xb3 26.♘e6+! is just in time, due to 26...♔e8 27.♕g8+! ♔d7 28.♘c5+, winning the queen on b3.

24...♘c4!?

Setting up the unstoppable threat of 25...a3. White's only chance is getting to the black king first, which requires very accurate calculation.

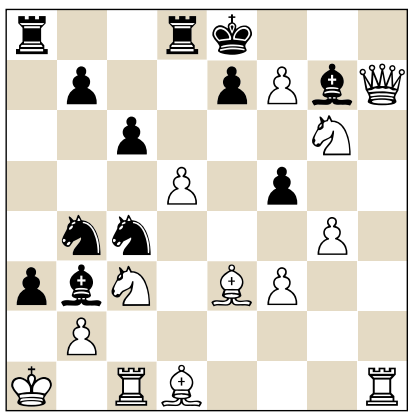


25.♘xg6+! Reversing the move order would be fatal. After 25.e6?? a3! Black will be mated.

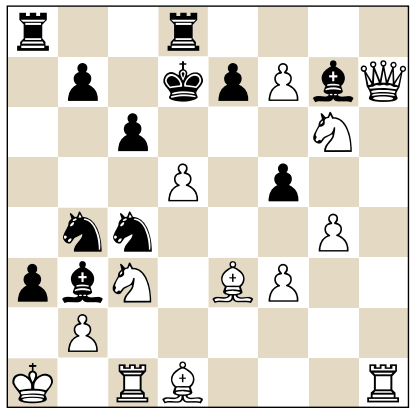
25...♔e8 26.e6 a3!?

Very close to being brilliant.

27.exf7+



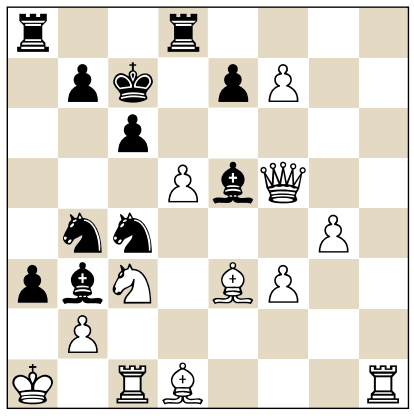
27...♔d7 It seems as if the black king has escaped, and being a queen down seems less important than the speed of the mating attack. That White is in grave danger is illustrated by 28.bxa3?? ♖xa3+ 29.♔b1 ♗c2+!!, which forces mate: 30.♗xc2 ♖a1+!! 31.♔xa1 ♗xc3+ 32.♔b1 ♘a3 mate; 30.♖xc2 ♖b3+! also leads to mate, the point being 31.♔c1 ♘d3+. But:



28.♘e5+!!

Destabilizing the knight on c4 is the key idea, as without it, Black has no forced mate. Since 28...♔c7 29.♘xc4 puts an end to the black attack, as does 28...♘xe5 29.♗xb3, Black has no choice:

28...♗xe5 29.♕xf5+ ♔c7

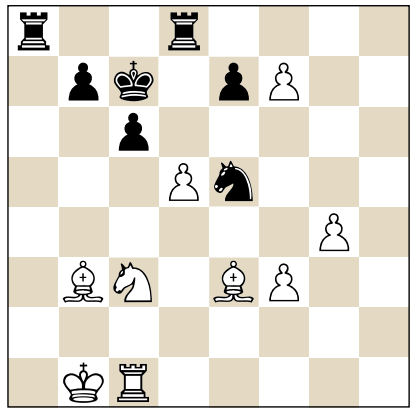


30.♕xe5+!! Forcing the ♘c4 to leave its post. Since 30...♔c8 31.♕e6+ is curtains, Black has to take.

30...♘xe5 31.♗xb3

The bishop on b3 did end up hanging! Materially, Black is not in a hopeless situation, as he now wins an exchange, but the passed pawn on f7 decides the issue in White's favour.

31...axb2+ 32.♔xb2 ♘bd3+ 33.♔b1 ♘xc1 34.♖xc1



34...♔c8 If 34...♘xf7, 35.dxc6, threatening to take on f7, as well as going ♘b5+, wins.

35.dxc6 bxc6 36.f4

And Black resigned. Magnus' trademark is indeed his unique technical performance, which invites comparisons to Capablanca, but in this game he showed he can also play like Tal.

■ ■ ■

In Round 8, the World Champion needed a win with Black to enter the last round half a point ahead of Vladimir Kramnik and last year's winner Yu Yangyi. Shakhriyar Mamedyarov wasn't the worst opponent he could have hoped for.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

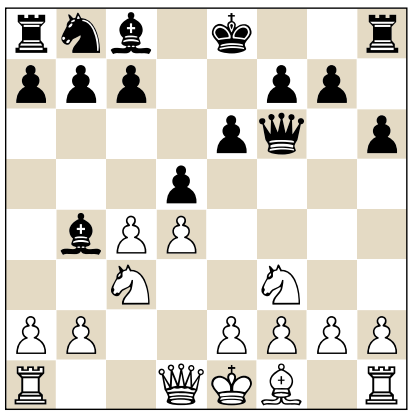
NI 27.5 – D38
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Magnus Carlsen
Doha 2015 (8)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4

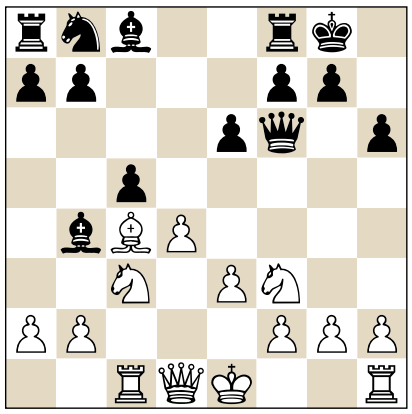
Carlsen can always spring a surprise on you, but there are a few solid openings that he keeps coming back to. One of them is the Ragozin Defence.

5.♗g5 h6 6.♗xf6 ♕xf6

In this variation, Black has the long-term advantage of the bishop pair, but White is trying to use his lead in development.

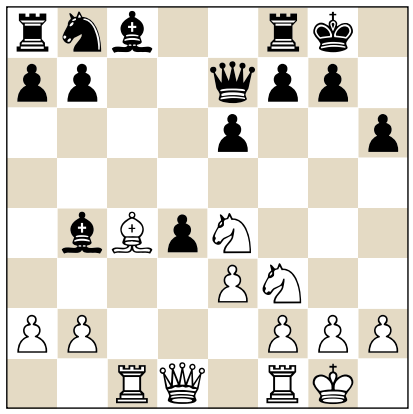


7.e3 0-0 8.♖c1 dxc4 9.♗xc4 c5



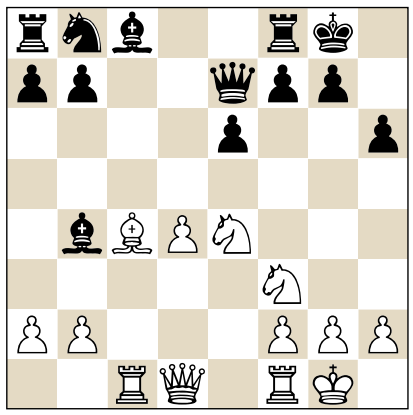
10.0-0 I personally tried 10.dxc5 against Magnus in Shamkir, when he showed a precise way to equalize with 10...♘d7!, only to make a blunder on the next move, which I unfortunately wasn't able to exploit: 11.c6!? ♘e5? (11...bxc6! 12.0-0 ♘e5, with equality) 12.♘xe5 ♕xe5 13.♕b3! (13.0-0 bxc6= was the game) 13...♗a5 14.cxb7 ♖b8 15.♗a6!, and White is better.

10...cxd4 11.♘e4 ♕e7



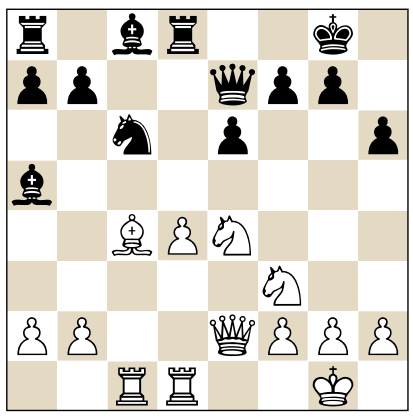
12.exd4

It's trendier to recapture on d4 with a piece, although recent games show that Black should be doing fine here, too. I was curious to see if Shakh had something in mind, since so far he had been making his moves with a lot of enthusiasm. Unfortunately, though, he disappointed.



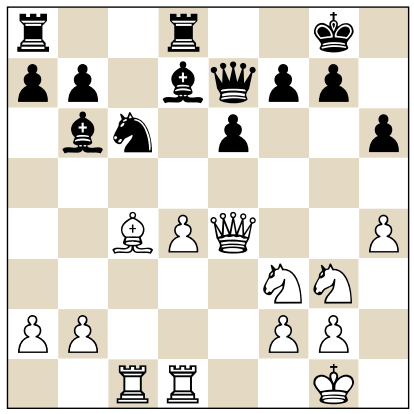
12...♖d8 13.♕e2 ♘c6 14.♖fd1 ♗a5

This move is precise. It has been played a few times and is also the first suggestion of the computer. No idea why, but Shakh sank into thought here and went for the wrong plan.

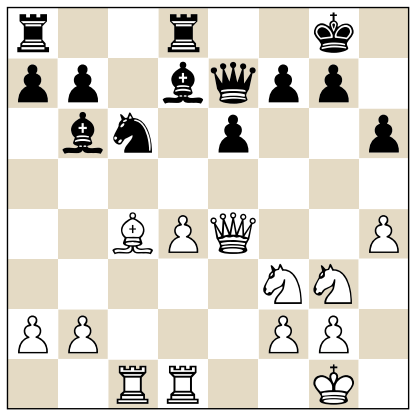


15.♘g3 Here 15.♗b5 ♗d7 16.♘c5 ♗e8 17.d5 ♖xd5 18.♖xd5 exd5 19.♕xe7 ♘xe7 20.♘xb7 has been played twice, with equality.

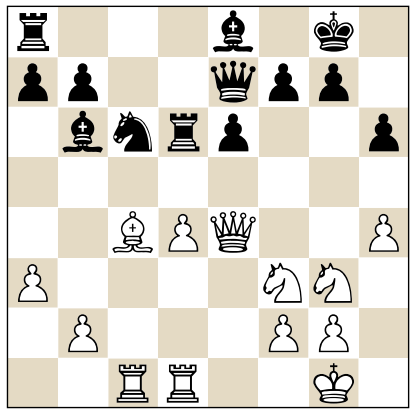
15...♗b6 16.♕e4 ♗d7 17.h4



White keeps on playing for a kingside attack, but it doesn't work.

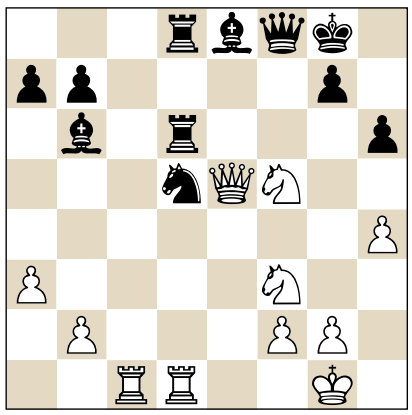


17...♗e8 18.a3 ♖d6



19.♕g4?? Here 19.d5 was a must, and I think things wouldn't have been all that dramatic: 19...exd5 20.♖xd5, and although Black can claim a slight advantage, White's centralization is promising him excellent chances of steering the game to a draw. But Shakhriyar probably has some Magnus-complex and decided to go down in flames instead.

19...♖ad8 20.d5 ♕f8! 21.♕e4 ♘e7 22.♗d3 f5 23.♕e5 ♘xd5 24.♗xf5 exf5 25.♘xf5

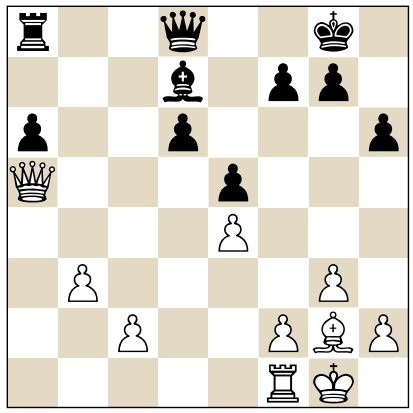


25...♖c6 The easiest way, but in the worst case there would have been alternatives that would have won as well, e.g. 25...♗c6 26.♘xd6 ♖xd6. White resigned.

As for myself, I had a nice start, winning classy games against Nils Grandelius and Radek Wojtaszek in Rounds 2 and 3. I couldn't possibly have imagined that my win against Radek would be the end of my streak. In fact, I was unable to break through even once in my remaining games. My white games didn't really go well from the opening onwards, but I did have some good winning chances in my black games. It wasn't easy against Carlsen, who was trying to push his luck against me, but remained within the borders of the merely dubious. But it should have been possible to get something out of the winning position I had against Ganguly. Anyway, here is my game against Radek.

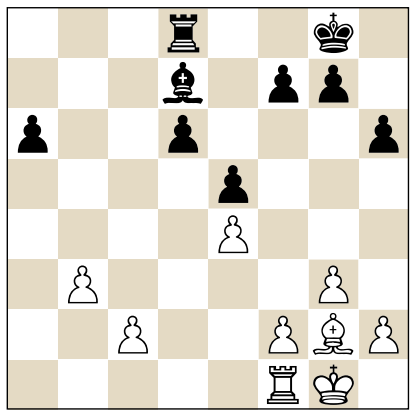
SI 14.2 – B91
Anish Giri
Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Doha 2015 (3)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.g3 e5 7.♘de2 ♗e7 8.♗g2 b5 9.♘d5 ♘bd7 10.♘ec3 ♘b6 11.♘xe7 ♕xe7 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗xf6 ♕xf6 14.a4 bxa4 15.♘xa4 ♘xa4 16.♖xa4 0-0 17.0-0 ♗d7 18.♖a5 ♖fb8 19.b3 ♖b5 20.♕d2 ♖xa5 21.♕xa5 ♕d8



I didn't get all that much from the opening, but then I wasn't playing for so much either. Now it seems that a draw is close, but I started finding some little ideas to keep the game going.

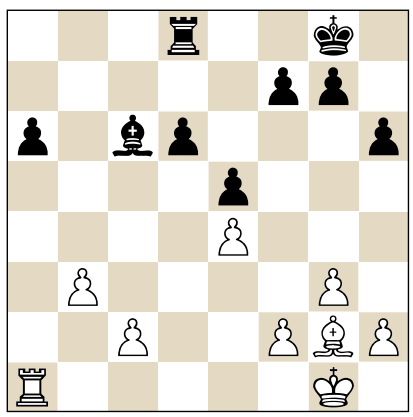
22.♕xd8+ ♖xd8



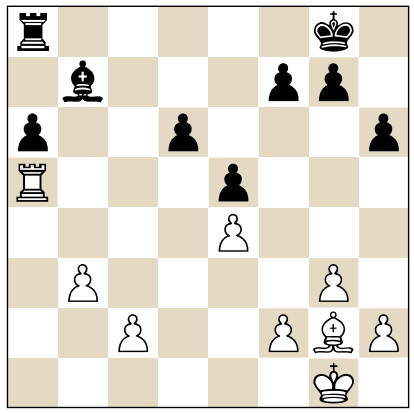
23.♖d1!
After 23.♖a1 ♖c8! 24.c4 ♖b8! draws on the spot.

23...♗c6?!
After 23...♗e8! 24.♖a1 ♖c8 25.c4 ♖b8 26.♖xa6 ♖xb3 27.♖xd6 ♖c3 28.♗f1 ♔f8, Black should be holding. For now I have an extra pawn, but I am afraid not for too long.

24.♖a1! Now I get what I want.

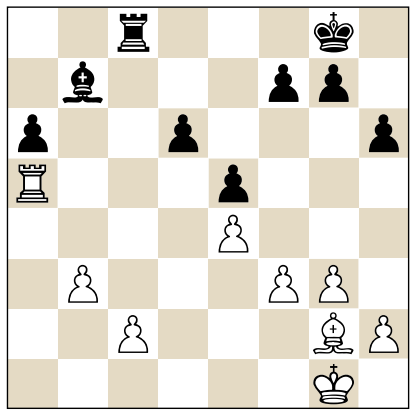


24...♖a8 25.♖a5! On 25.b4 Black has 25...♗b5!. **25...♗b7**



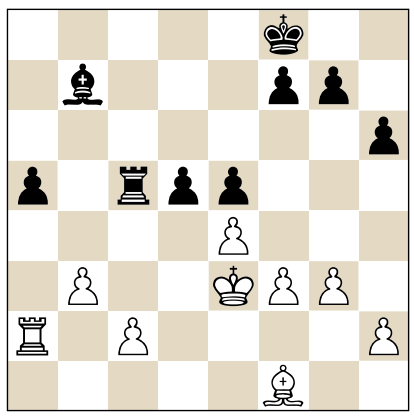
26.f3! A very simple, yet strong idea. The key is to transfer the bishop to d3, from where it exerts pressure on the a6-pawn and cements my own queenside pawns.

26...♖c8



27.♖a2!
No issues with moving back if it's for the greater good.

27...♖c5 28.♔f2 a5 29.♗f1 ♔f8 30.♔e3 d5

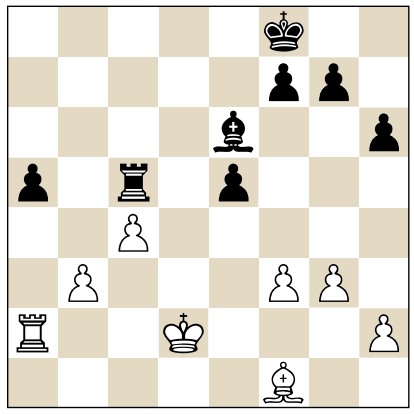


Not playing ...d5 was an option, but Black is passive and White might think about how to improve his position. I was thinking to place the bishop on c4 and move the rook to a1, so as to be

able to swing to the kingside and start advancing the kingside pawns.

31.exd5 ♗xd5 32.c4! ♗e6 33.♔d2

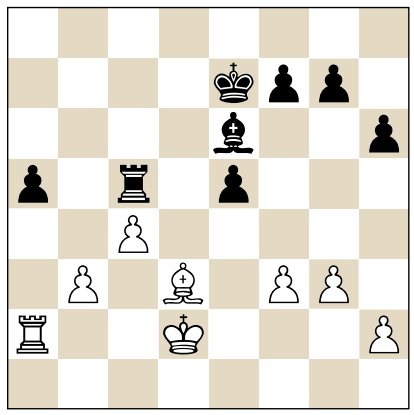
I figured the king would stand ideally on c3. Then I would always be able to play b4 at the right moment.



33...♔e7 33...g5!? was interesting.

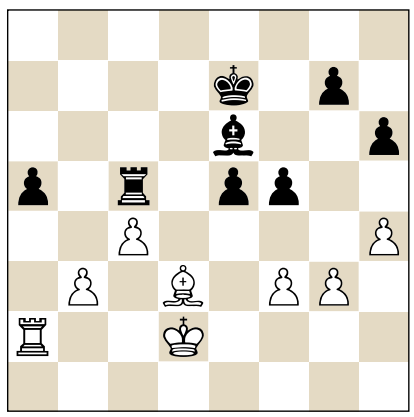
34.♗d3!

Subtle and maybe not even that strong, but such little moves, one by one, get your opponent frustrated.



34...f5 34...g5 35.g4! was the point.

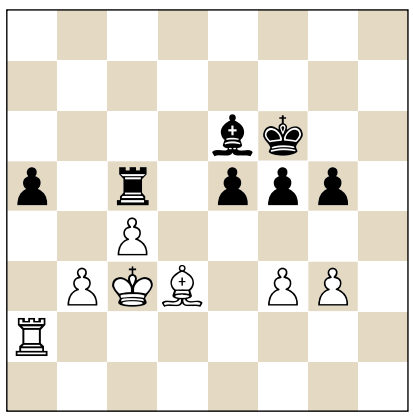
35.h4!



35...g5

This exchanges a pair of pawns, but opens a file for my rook. Otherwise I was planning to go ♔c3 and f4, clearing the d4-square for my king, when the rook on c5 would start feeling shaky, as it is forced to protect the a5-pawn.

36.hxg5 hxg5 37.♔c3 ♔f6



38.♖a1! I am not the type of guy who likes to brag (yes, I am), but this is a really nice one. The resources are rather limited, but it's a zugzwang for what it's worth.

38.♖h2 at once leads nowhere: 38...♖c8 39.♖h6+ ♔f7 40.♖h7+ ♔f6 41.♖a7 ♖h8 42.♖xa5 ♖h3, with counterplay.

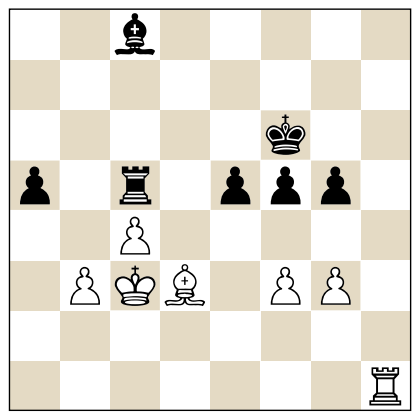
38...♗c8?!

38...♔e7 would have been less of a concession.

39.♖h1!

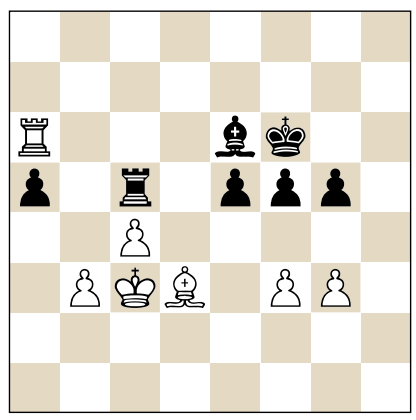
MARIA EMELIANOVA

With three wins from his first three games Anish Giri had a promising start, but the Dutch third seed was unable to break through even once in the remaining games.



39...♔g7 39...♖c7 does not really activate the rook now, as after 40.♖h6+ ♔g7 41.♖d6 the seventh rank will be blocked by his own king.

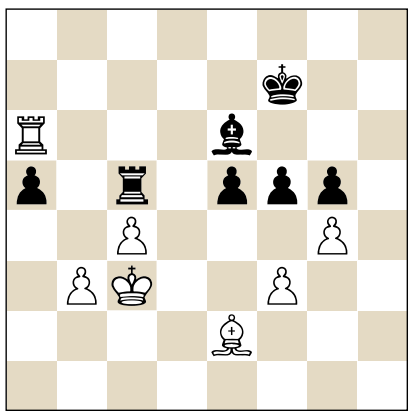
40.♖h5 ♔g6 41.♖h8 ♔g7 42.♖d8 ♔f6 43.♖d6+ ♗e6 44.♖a6



Getting the rook to a6 is a huge achievement, yet the position remains

quite tough to crack. In fact, it's not at all clear what is to be done about the blockade.

44...♔e7 45.♖b6 ♔f7 46.♖a6 ♔e7 47.♗e2! ♔f7 48.g4

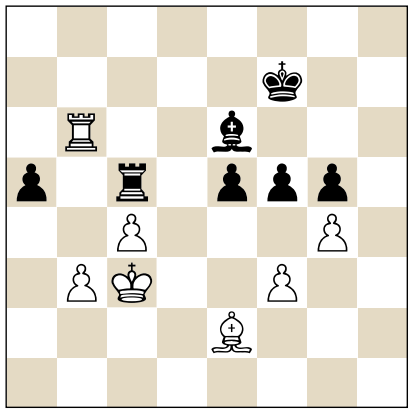


The correct plan. Now I will take on f5 at the right moment and play ♗d3.

48...♔e7 49.♖b6

49.gxf5 ♗xf5 50.♗d3 ♗e6 51.♗e4 g4 52.fxg4 ♗xg4 exchanges too many pawns even for my taste: 53.♗c6 ♗d7!.

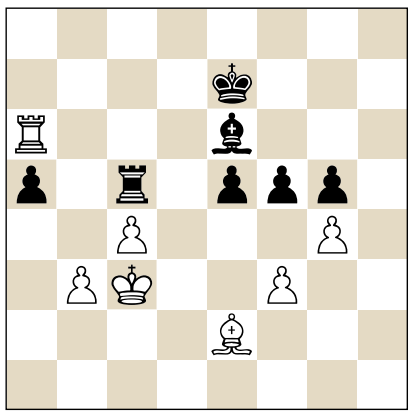
49...♔f7



50.♖d6!

Preparing another zugzwang.

50...♔e7 51.♖a6



51...fxg4

Realizing that he had been tricked, Radek gives me one more thing, a square for the bishop on f3. But the position remains hard to crack.

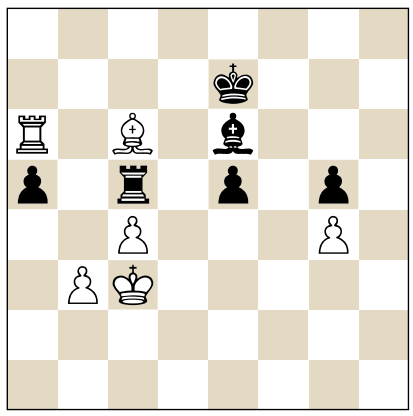
51...♔f7 now allows 52.gxf5! ♗xf5 53.♗d3! ♗e6 54.♗e4, and the point of the triangle was that after 54...g4 55.fxg4 ♗xg4 the king is one square too far off: 56.♗c6!, and the threat is ♗b5.

52.fxg4 ♔f7 53.♖a7+ ♔f6 54.♗f3 ♗f7

Allowing me one more tempo to get my bishop to c6.

I expected 54...♔g6.

55.♖a6+ ♔e7 56.♗c6 ♗e6



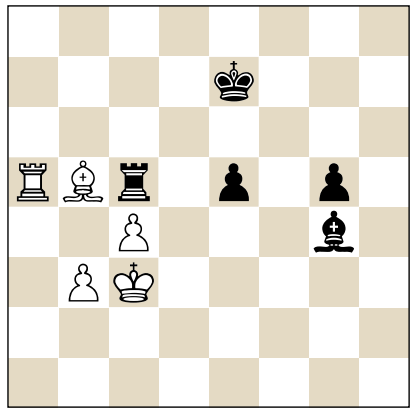
Now I have achieved the absolute maximum, but I realized that even after that, there wasn't all that much that I could do. The clock was ticking, and not seeing a way to break through, I decided to try my last chance, getting connected passed pawns, hoping that they would outweigh Black's single runners.

57.♗b5!?

'I decided to try my last chance, getting connected passed pawns, hoping that they would outweigh Black's single runners.'

57.♖a7+! ♔f6 (57...♔d6 58.♗b5 ♗xg4 59.♖xa5 is a better version, since b4-c5 comes with tempo) 58.♗d7! would have led to another round of subtle manoeuvring, but there already had been enough dancing around, even for me.

57...♗xg4 58.♖xa5



This is an interesting position. While thinking about my future prospects, I suddenly noticed a devilish trick. Surprisingly enough, my opponent went straight for it.

58...♗f3?? 59.♖a7+ ♔f6 60.♗d7!

And within a couple of minutes this long game had suddenly come to an end. Black resigned.

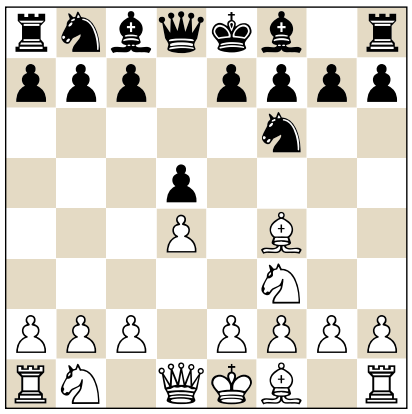
If he had played 58...♗e6 or, even more precisely, 58...♖c7!, the position would have been entirely tenable. The connected passed pawns look scary, but it seems that Black's counterplay would have been just in time.

Another contender was Vladimir Kramnik. Big Vlad always stayed more or less within striking distance from the leader, but when he faced him in the last round with black, trailing the leader by half a point, it turned out that the ex-World Champion was satisfied with 2nd place (as it turned out, it would be 3rd) and taking his rating to a pretty 2801. Obviously, he has conquered this height in the past, but he is definitely happy to return there now, when the game of chess is dominated by youths.

Let's have a look at his win in the penultimate round.

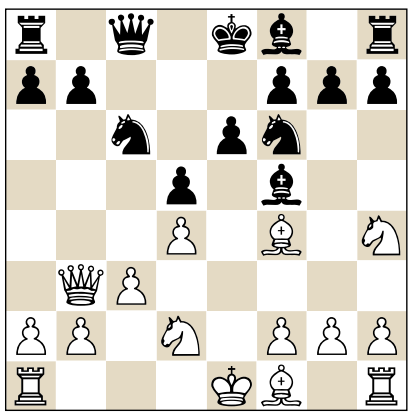
QP 6.2 – D02
Vladimir Kramnik
Sanan Sjugirov
Doha 2015 (8)

1.♘f3 d5 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗f4



The London System is not the most venomous of openings, but the focus soon shifts to a complicated middle-game, something White was aiming for.

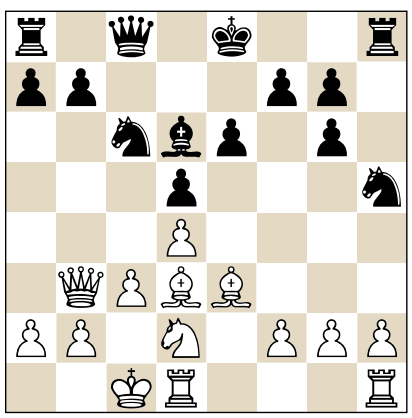
3...c5 4.e3 ♘c6 5.♘bd2 cxd4 6.exd4 ♗f5 7.c3 e6 8.♕b3 ♕c8 9.♘h4



9...♗g6

9...♗e4 is another way of giving up the bishop pair. Unfortunately, there is no way not to.

10.♘xg6 hxg6 11.♗d3 ♘h5 12.♗e3 ♗d6 13.0-0-0!?

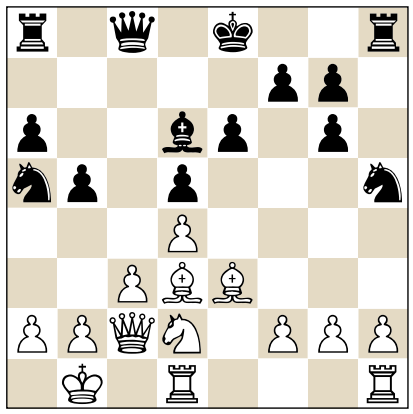


Creative. Now Black has a choice between whether to go for a sharp game or to castle queenside, when maybe in the long run White would be able to get a plus thanks to his bishop pair, although the position is reasonably closed at the moment.

13...a6

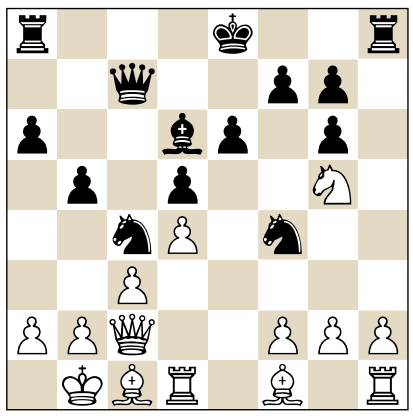
The safe option was 13...♕c7 14.♔b1 0-0-0, but as I said before, White has chances of getting something out of the bishop pair.

14.♔b1 b5 15.♕c2 ♘a5



A standard manoeuvre.

16.♘f3 ♘c4 17.♗c1 ♕c7 18.♘g5!? ♘f4 19.♗f1



19...0-0-0?! Quite shocking.

It would have been more logical to slowly try to get something going on the queenside and keep the king in the centre, considering that it's reasonably closed at the moment. For instance: 19...♗e7 20.♘f3 ♘h5 21.g3 a5 22.h4 ♘f6 23.♗d3 b4, and things get messy.

20.a4 ♕b7 21.axb5 axb5 22.b3?

This gives Black an incredible opportunity, which he misses.

Celeb 64

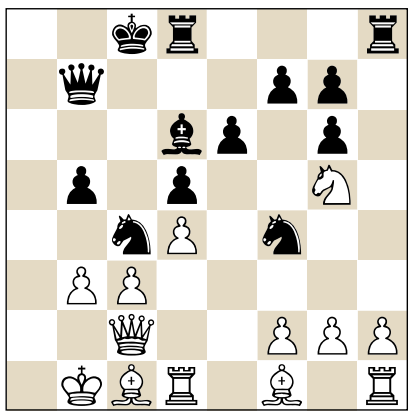
John Henderson

Stephen Fry

After more than 13 years and 180 barnstorming episodes of the popular BBC panel show QI, the multi-talented actor, comedian, and author Stephen Fry announced his retirement halfway through the alphabet. He leaves the show in February at the letter 'M' and will be replaced by Sandi Toksvig.
As celebrities go, Fry was once regarded as being a very avid chess player, who caught the playing bug at Cambridge University in the early 1980s with his many encounters over the board with his sidekick (and now Hollywood star) Hugh Laurie, all chronicled in his 1997 autobiography, *Moab is My Washpot*. Though in the book, Fry freely admits chess to be 'ludicrously difficult.' Nevertheless, he famously confessed to owning a superb board of bird's-eye maple and Moluccan ebony, edged in sycamore, an 1871 boxwood and ebony Staunton set from Jaques of London, plus a chess clock by Grant's of Stamford. 'Unfortunately,' he sighed, 'what I bring to this wonderful equipment is the playing talent of a dead rat.' Fry also played the part of Onno Quist, in the 1997 movie *The Discovery of Heaven*, based on the best-selling novel by Dutch author Harry Mulisch, which posthumously paid tribute to the author's friend, the legendary Dutch grandmaster Jan Hein Donner. ■

DAVID LLADA

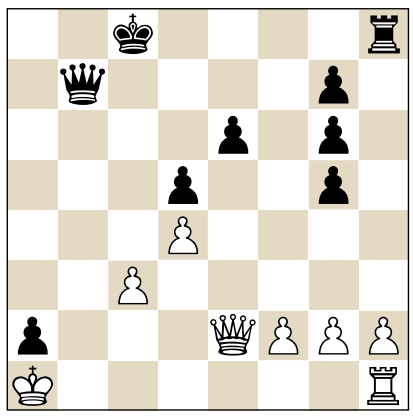
All smiles here, but Vladimir Kramnik was not too happy about his play in Qatar. But the Russian did improve his rating to a pretty 2801.



22...♘a5?

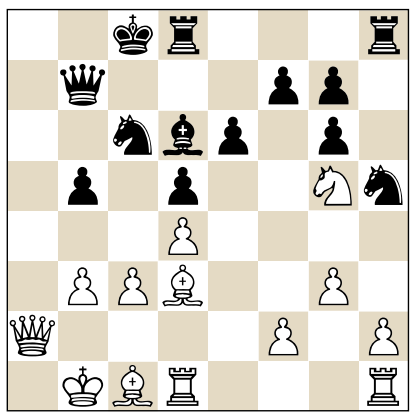
Now the game is back to normal. We can pretend this never happened and Big Vlad played a masterpiece. ☺

But after 22...f6! it's White's turn to be precise: 23.♗xc4! (after 23.g3 fxg5 24.gxf4 ♔c7! Black takes over. He just wants to double on the a-file and give mate. It's surprisingly hard to find any sort of defence; 23.♘f3 ♔d7! is also bad for White, when once again, ...♖a8 and ...♕a6 is a very simplistic yet effective idea) 23...bxc4 24.♗xf4 fxg5 25.♗xd6 cxb3 26.♕e2 ♖xd6 27.♔b2, with equality: 27...♖a6 28.♖a1 ♖a2+ 29.♖xa2 bxa2+ 30.♔a1! Note how the king is hiding behind the black pawn – a classic defensive idea!



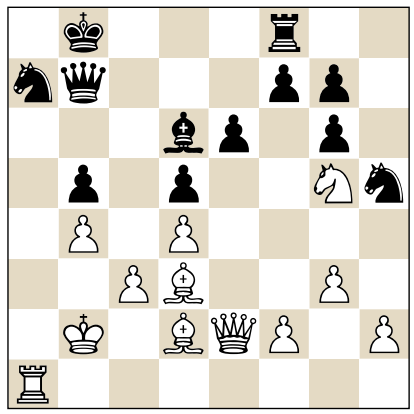
23.♕a2 ♘c6 24.g3 ♘h5 25.♗d3

Black's pieces are pushed back, the b5-pawn is weak and if anyone can profit from the a-file now, it's White.



25...♔b8 26.♕e2 ♘a7 27.♗d2 ♖c8 28.♔b2 ♖c6 29.♖a1 ♖f8 30.♖a2 All logical.

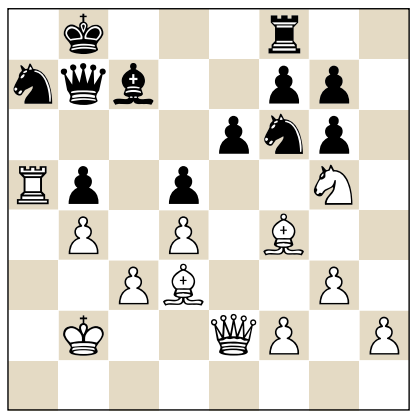
30...♖a6 31.♖xa6 ♕xa6 32.♖a1 ♕b7 33.b4



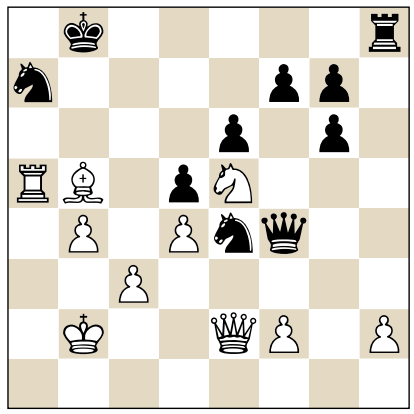
Both knights are too far from the c4-square, so White can afford to fix the weak pawn.

33...♘f6 34.♖a5 ♗c7 35.♗f4!

The b5-pawn is worth spoiling the kingside pawn structure for. Now it's about the weak king on b8.



35...♗xf4 36.gxf4 ♕c7 37.♗xb5 ♕xf4 38.♘f3! ♘e4 39.♘e5 ♖h8



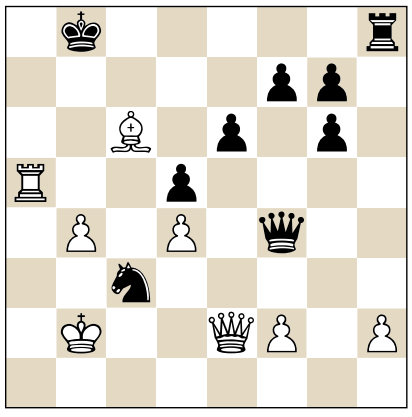
I briefly watched the position in the playing hall at this point. I was too lazy to figure out how White was winning, but looking at Big Vlad I saw that he saw.

40.♘c6+! ♘xc6 41.♗xc6

As it turns out that exchanging the

queens is not going to help since the rook on h8 would soon be lost, Sjugirov tries a desperado.

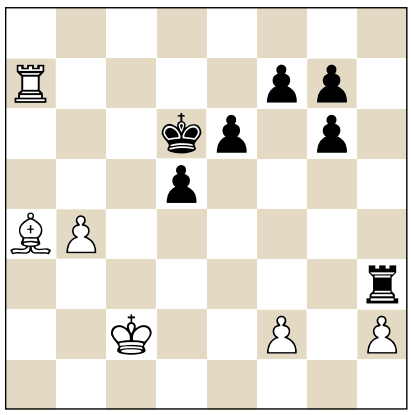
41...♘xc3



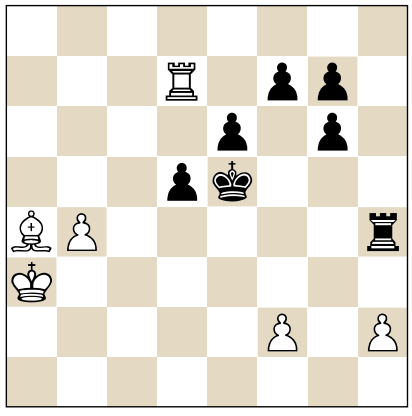
42.♔xc3 Kramnik has calculated a win, and one win is usually enough. 42.♕d3! is the machine way.

42...♖h3+ 43.♔c2 ♕xd4 44.♕b5+ ♔c7 45.♕b7+ ♔d6 46.♕b8+ ♔e7 47.♕a7+ ♕xa7 48.♖xa7+ ♔d6 49.♗a4

The endgame is hopeless for Black, as he will not be in time to organize any counterplay.



49...♖h4 Also 49...f6 50.♖d7+ ♔e5 51.b5! ♖xh2 52.b6! ♖xf2+ 53.♔b3 ♖f1 54.♔b4 ♖b1+ 55.♗b3 is game over. **50.♔b3 ♖h3+ 51.♔b2 ♖h4 52.♖d7+ ♔e5 53.♔a3!**



53...♔d4 53...♖h3+ is now nicely met by 54.♗b3.

54.♖xf7 ♖xh2 55.b5 ♔c5 56.♖c7+ Black resigned.

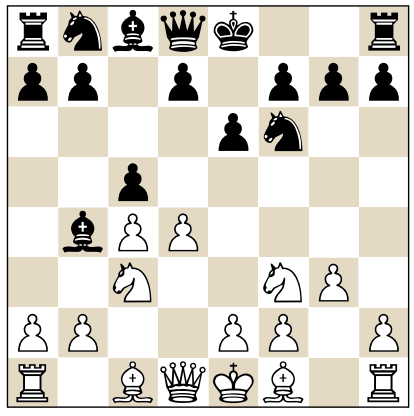
An important win for Kramnik. Pity for the little slip on move 22, otherwise he would probably have been the one proudly annotating this game and the reader would have had a little break from yours truly.

The surprise of the event, if you can call him a surprise after he had already surprised by winning the inaugural Qatar Masters last year, was the Chinese fighter Yu Yangyi. He was always nearby, mixing wins with occasional draws. Before the last round he suddenly found himself in a very interesting situation. Assuming that Carlsen and Kramnik would draw their game, a win with White would allow Yu to join the World Champion in first place and force a tiebreak. The only problem was that he was facing the ultra-solid Wesley So. In the end he managed to overcome this gigantic obstacle, but obviously not without some luck.

EO 44.9 – E20
Yu Yangyi
Wesley So
Doha 2015 (9)

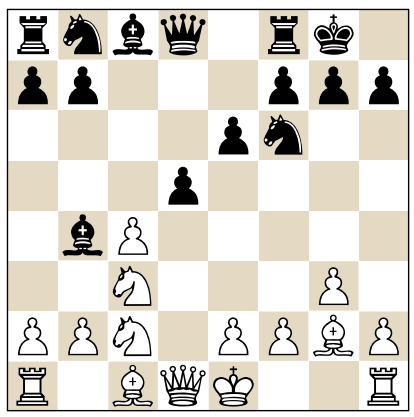
1.d4 Usually Yu is a 1.e4 player, but lately he seems to be running out of ideas against the Berlin.

1...♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♘f3 c5 5.g3



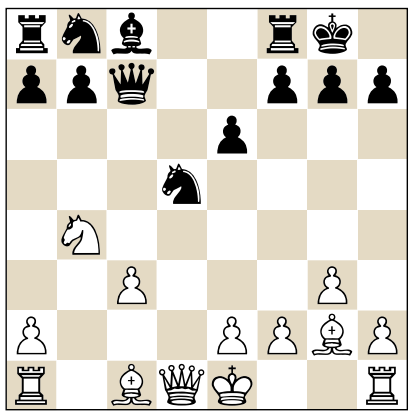
A big line, popular since the Kaspa-rov-Karpov matches and popular until this very day.

5...cxd4 6.♘xd4 0-0 7.♗g2 d5 8.♘c2!?



A rare idea. 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♕b3 is the main line.

8...♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♕c7 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘b4!?

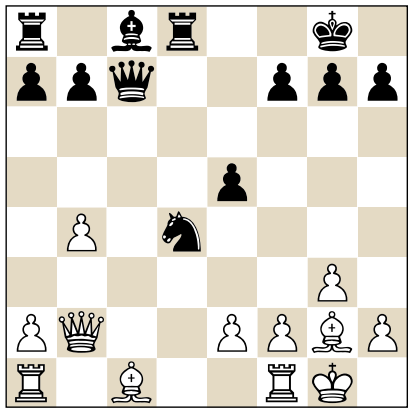


A novelty. Wesley reacts quite nicely.

11...♘xb4

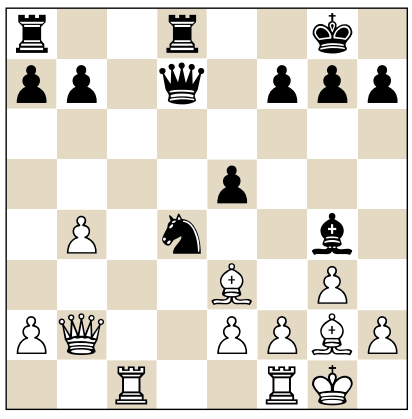
11...♕xc3+!? is obviously a valid option. White has definitely enough compensation with two nice bishops.

12.cxb4 ♖d8 13.♕b3 ♘c6 14.0-0 ♘d4 15.♕b2 e5



Black's centralization should compensate for White's bishop pair and I was expecting the game to end in a draw not too many moves from here.

16.♗e3 ♗g4! 17.♖ac1 ♕d7

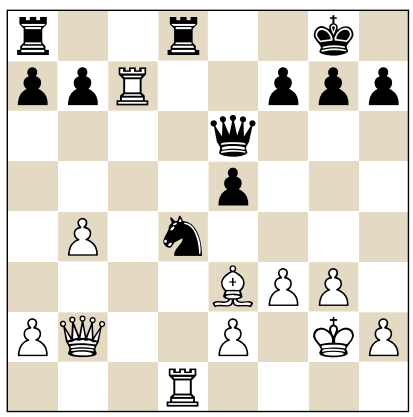


18.f3!? Showing some aggressive intentions.

18.♗xd4 gives White slight pressure after 18...♕xd4 19.♕xd4 ♖xd4 (or 19...exd4, but of course the game is likely to end in a draw after so many simplifications).

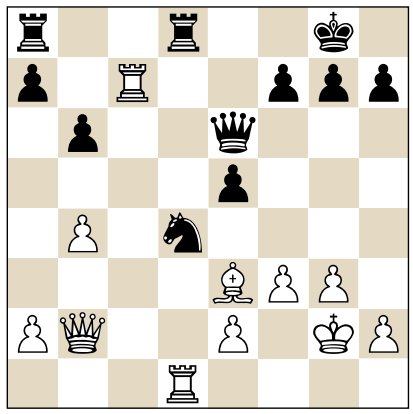
18...♗h3 18...♗e6!? was fine: 19.♖fd1 a5! 20.f4 ♕b5!, forcing matters and leading to simplifications: 21.♗xd4 exd4 22.♖xd4 ♖xd4 23.♕xd4 ♕xb4 and it's a draw.

19.♖fd1 ♗xg2 20.♔xg2 ♕e6 21.♖c7



White has a nice rook, but I felt that with the queens on the board, it doesn't hit much. In fact, I liked Black's position here. He is obviously the one fighting for equality, but it is extremely easy for White to go astray once Black sends the h-pawn down the board to bother the white king.

21...b6



22.a4 Maintaining the tension.

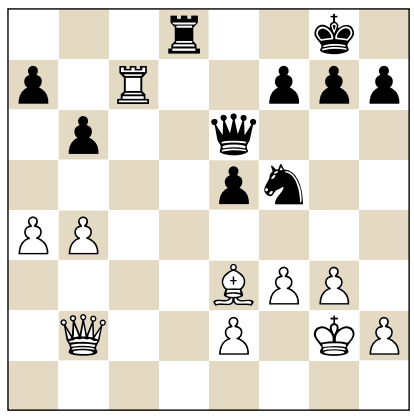
22.♗xd4!? would simplify the position, but after 22...♖xd4 (22...exd4 23.♖c2! will very likely win the d4-pawn) 23.♖xd4 exd4 24.♕c2 White is better, even if it's no big deal, for example after some logical moves, 24...h5!? 25.♕c4 ♕xc4 26.♖xc4 ♖d8 27.♖c7 a5 28.bxa5 bxa5 29.♖a7 d3 30.exd3 ♖xd3 31.♖xa5 ♖d2+ 32.♔h3 ♖f2, White is not very likely to win a rook endgame like this.

22...♘f5!

I like this move. Now Black is playing for three results and White no longer has an easy way to simplify. Don't forget; Wesley wasn't fighting for first place, but sharing second wouldn't be that bad either!

22...h5!? is fine, but after 23.♗xd4 the fun is gone.

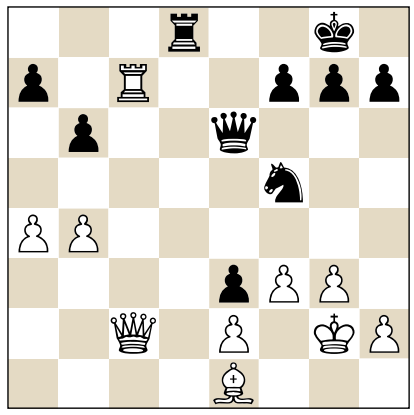
23.♖xd8+ ♖xd8



24.♗f2

24.♗g1!? was obviously the alternative: 24...e4 25.♖xa7. Black has plenty of compensation, but it's not easy to prove something after 25...h5 26.♕c2! exf3+ 27.exf3 g5!? 28.♖c7 g4! and now for example 29.♖c3! h4! 30.fxg4 h3+! 31.♔f1 ♖e8! 32.♕d2 ♘d6, when White should probably bail out with 33.♕g5+ ♔f8 34.♗e3! ♕e4 35.♕h6+ ♔g8 36.♕g5+ ♔f8 37.♕h6+.

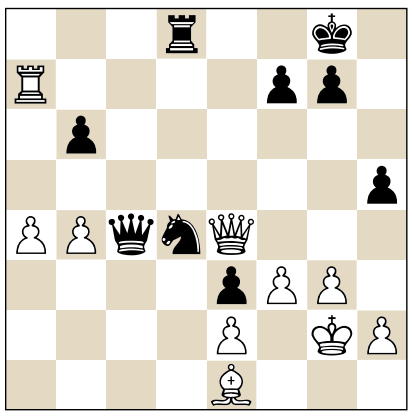
24...e4 25.♕c2 e3 26.♗e1



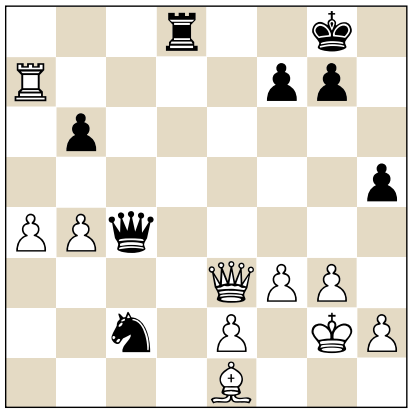
26...h5!

Such moves are played by hand. At some point, though, calculations will have to be made.

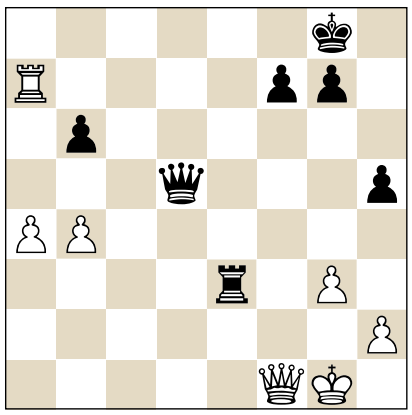
27.♖xa7?! Risky, but the position has already become too complicated for easy variations.
27...♘d4 28.♕e4 ♕c4!



29.♕xe3?
Here 29.♕d3 ♕c1 30.♗c3 ♘c6 wins material, but the game is far from over. For example, after 31.♖d7 ♖xd7 32.♕xd7 ♕xc3 33.♕e8+ ♔h7 34.♕xf7 a draw would be the most likely outcome, even though Black is to be preferred.
29...♘c2!



30.♕e7
30.♕c3 saves the piece but not the game: 30...♕xe2+ 31.♗f2 ♖e8! 32.♔g1 ♘e3! 33.♕e1 ♕xf3 34.♗xe3 ♖xe3 35.♕f1 ♕d5

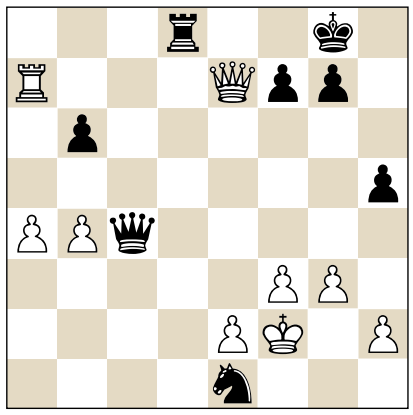


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

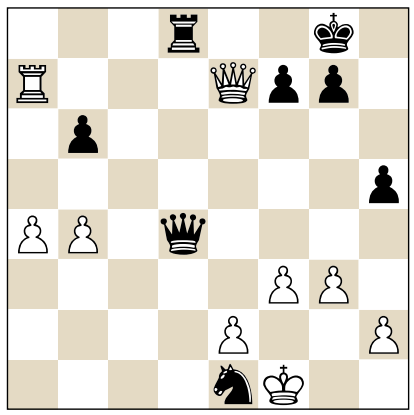
DAVID LLADA

The energy that Yu Yangyi invested in his last-round win against Wesley So took its toll in the rapid tiebreak. Facing Magnus Carlsen, last year's winner lacked the strength to put up a real fight.

This is a very bad position. White has to find only moves not to lose on the spot, but even then he is probably lost after 36.♖c7! ♖b3!.
30...♘xe1+ 31.♔f2



31...♕d4+?
Missing White's reply.
31...♖d1! would put White on the brink of a defeat: 32.♕e8+ ♔h7 33.♕e4+ ♕xe4 34.fxe4 ♘c2, and to me this endgame looks nearly lost for White, although it's not all that simple yet.
32.♔f1!
Oops. Here Wesley was clearly frustrated. Indeed, Black has nothing better than a draw here. However, now Wesley made a classical mistake. It's always better to give perpetual check than to receive it...



32...♘c2?
It's either that Wesley thought 32...♖f8 would lead to a draw as well, or he had missed that the king can actually not hide on the queenside: 33.♔xe1 ♕g1+ 34.♔d2 ♕d4+ 35.♔c2 ♕c4+ 36.♔d2 (now there is no perpetual after 36.♔b2?, but since the f7-pawn is protected, there is actually more: 36...♖c8!) 36...♕d4+, with a draw.
33.♕xf7+ ♔h8 34.♕xh5+ ♔g8 35.♕f7+ ♔h8 36.♕h5+ ♔g8 37.♕f7+

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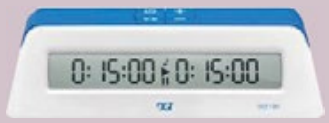

€24 / £16.85

Electronic DGT clock

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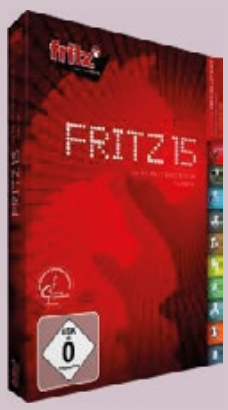

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Magnus Carlsen chess set

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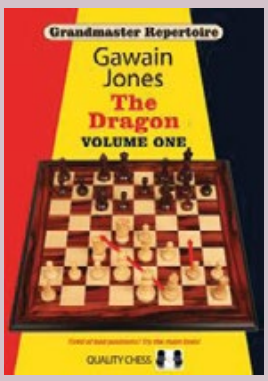
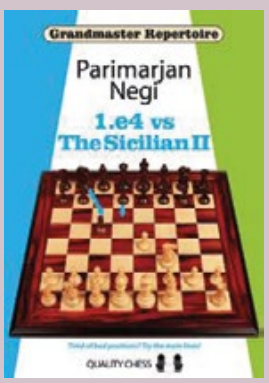


The Dragon Volume One



1.e4 vs The Sicilian II

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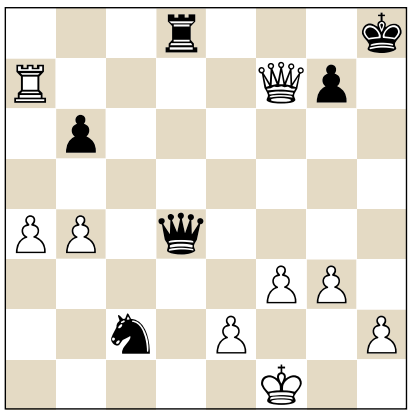
Perfect calculation. The position is not repeated three times, because the pawn on h5 is missing!

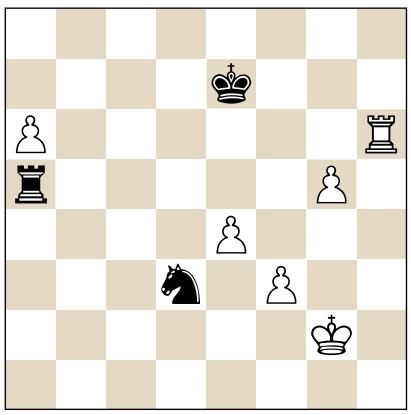
37...♔h8 When watching the game, I noticed the right move here and obviously so did Yu.



38.♔g2!

The tables have been turned and the rest of the game was basically very sad for Black. His drawing chances are very slim and the defence is incredibly unpleasant.

38...♘e3+ 39.♔h3 ♔h7 40.♕h5+ ♔g8 41.♖e7 ♖f8 42.a5 bxa5 43.bxa5 ♘d5 44.♕e5 ♕xe5 45.♖xe5 ♘b4 46.♖e4 ♘d5 47.♖c4 ♖f6 48.♖c5 ♖f5 49.♖c8+ ♔f7 50.a6 ♘e3 51.g4 ♖a5 52.♖c7+ ♔f6 53.♖c6+ ♔f7 54.♔g3 g5 55.h4 gxh4+ 56.♔xh4 ♘d5 57.e4 ♘e7 58.♖b6 ♘g6+ 59.♔g3 ♖a3 60.g5 ♘e5 61.♖f6+ ♔e7 62.♔g2 ♘d3 63.♖h6 ♖a5

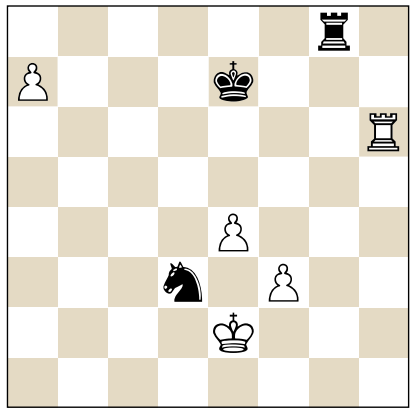


64.a7?

This misses a win, but it's too complicated for humans anyway, especially tired humans:

64.♔h3! ♘c5 65.♔g4 ♖xa6 66.♖xa6 ♘xa6 67.♔h5, and wins, apparently.

64...♖xg5+ 65.♔f1 ♖g8 66.♔e2

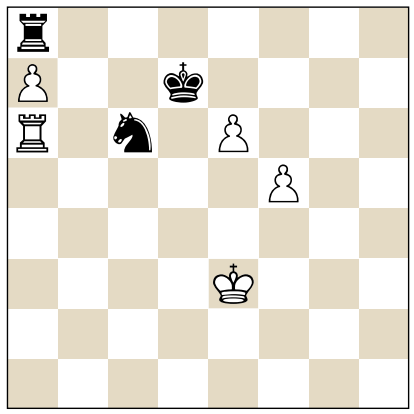


66...♘e5? Instead, 66...♘c5 67.e5 ♔d7 would eventually hold, but it's definitely not easy to see: 68.♔e3 ♘e6 69.f4 ♖a8 70.f5 ♘c7, with a draw.

67.f4 ♘d7 68.♖a6 ♖a8 69.♔e3

Black is not able to win the a-pawn in time.

69...♘c5 70.♖a1 ♘b7 71.e5 ♘d8 72.♖a6! ♔d7 73.f5 ♘c6 74.e6+



74...♔c7 It's possible to miss that the position after 74...♔d6 75.f6! is winning, so very likely a tired Wesley just had miscalculated on the way here.

75.f6 ♘b4 76.f7 ♔b7 77.♖d6

Black resigned.

A marathon game ending in favour of the Chinese fighter, but he definitely got a couple of winks from Lady Luck around move 30.

The tiebreak that Yu had to play against the World Champion was painful. Towards the end of the event the Norwegian had warmed up and was sharp, while Yu clearly had trouble adjusting to another format. The unambiguous 2-0 was the logical and expected outcome, and the trophy went to the man most trophies belong to, although undoubtedly this year Carlsen's dominance has received quite a serious blow.

ALLA OBORINA

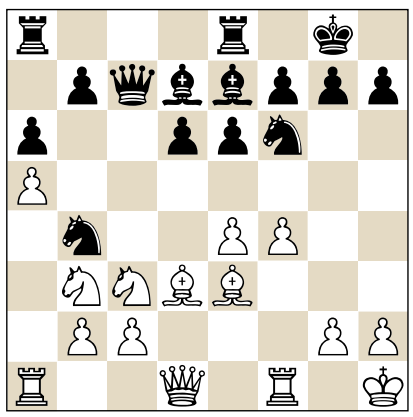
Another Chinese to watch? Xu Yinglun, 19 years old and untitled, beat Nikita Vitiugov in the first round went on to score a GM norm.

Before I end my story on the Qatar Masters 2015, I should briefly discuss another aspect of this open tournament, one I briefly touched on at the beginning: the number of promising juniors. China's Wei Yi suffered a serious blow, maybe because he hadn't yet recovered from the psychological blow I dealt him in my previous article, where I said that the Chinese prodigy has yet a lot to learn ☺. However, watching him play, I actually felt that he had kind of moved from the category of prodigies to the category of those suffering at the hands of prodigies.

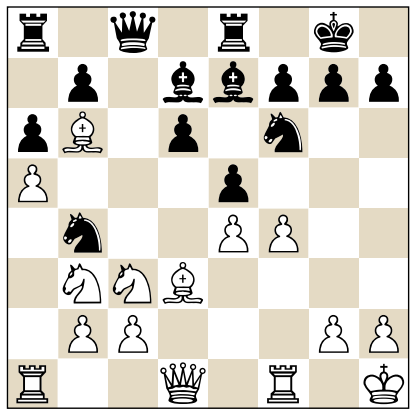
Let me, therefore, mention another Chinese player whose performance stood out, 19-year-old Xu Yinglun. The untitled Xu Yinglun scored a GM norm. He started well by beating Vitiugov and never let go. He finished 9th, one point behind the winner.

SI 24.8 – B85
Nikita Vitiugov
Xu Yinglun
Doha 2015 (1)

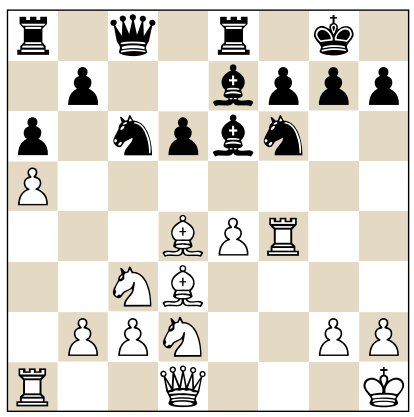
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e6 7.a4 ♘c6 8.f4 ♗e7 9.♗e2 ♕c7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♔h1 ♖e8 12.♗d3 ♗d7 13.♘b3 ♘b4 14.a5



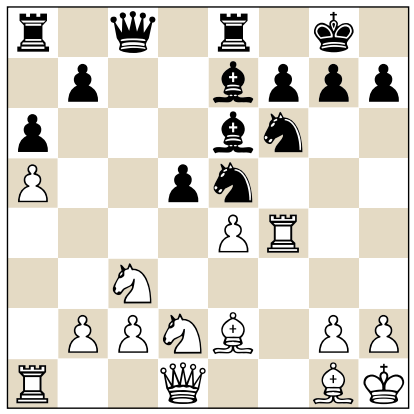
14...e5!? The d5-square is under control, so this push is strategically justified.
15.♗b6 ♕c8



16.♘d2 16.♗e2!? would have been a bit more sober. **16...exf4 17.♖xf4 ♗e6 18.♗d4 ♘c6!?** Provoking an exchange sacrifice.



19.♗g1 After 19.♗xf6 ♗xf6 20.♖xf6 gxf6 White has compensation, but with the dark squares under control, Xu Yinglun probably correctly judged that Black is not really in any danger. Nonetheless, this was a more enterprising option than what Vitiugov chose in the game.
19...♘e5 20.♗e2 d5! When this happens so easily in the Najdorf, it's usually bad news for White.



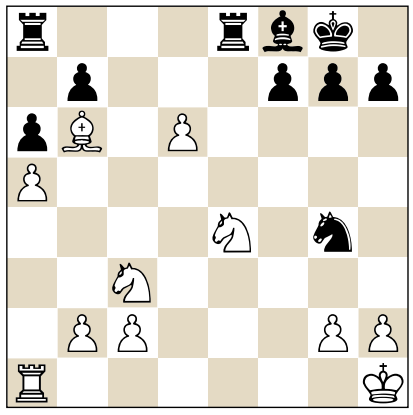
21.♖xf6 An interesting idea, but there isn't enough compensation for the exchange and Xu Yinglun confidently proves that.

Doha 2015

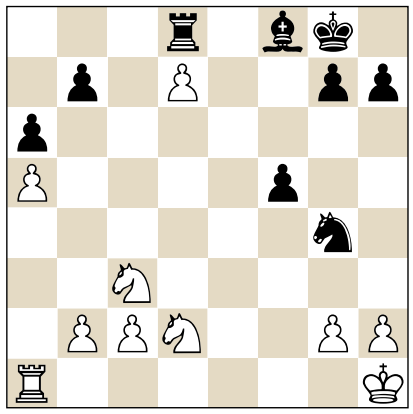
					TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2834	7	2887
2	Yu Yangyi	CHN	2736	7	2863
3	Vladimir Kramnik	RUS	2796	6½	2833
4	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2766	6½	2793
5	Sanan Sjugirov	RUS	2646	6½	2791
6	Ni Hua	CHN	2693	6½	2762
7	Vassily Ivanchuk	UKR	2710	6½	2700
8	Anish Giri	NED	2784	6	2815
9	Xu Yinglun	CHN	2470	6	2800
10	Surya Shekhar Ganguly	IND	2648	6	2743
11	Pentala Harikrishna	IND	2743	6	2736
12	Ruslan Ponomariov	UKR	2710	6	2720
13	Vladimir Akopian	ARM	2648	6	2713
14	Jan Krzysztof Duda	POL	2663	6	2697
15	Ngoc Truong Son Nguyen	VIE	2642	6	2691
16	Nikita Vitiugov	RUS	2724	6	2687
17	SP Sethuraman	IND	2639	6	2634
18	Wesley So	USA	2775	5½	2753
19	Li Chao	CHN	2750	5½	2750
20	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2748	5½	2743
21	Dariusz Swiercz	POL	2646	5½	2733
22	Zhang Zhong	SIN	2619	5½	2730
23	Radoslaw Wojtaszek	POL	2723	5½	2697
24	Kacper Piorun	POL	2637	5½	2677
25	David Howell	ENG	2688	5½	2676
26	Alexander Ipatov	TUR	2619	5½	2675
27	Daniel Naroditsky	USA	2628	5½	2670
28	Maxim Matlakov	RUS	2684	5½	2666
29	Dmitry Jakovenko	RUS	2737	5½	2663
30	Nils Grandelius	SWE	2632	5½	2661
31	Anton Korobov	UKR	2713	5½	2661
32	Viktor Bologan	MDA	2654	5½	2649
33	Lin Chen	CHN	2532	5½	2632
34	Lu Shanglei	CHN	2618	5½	2617
35	Santosh G. Vidit	IND	2644	5½	2615
36	Vladimir Fedoseev	RUS	2664	5½	2614
37	Denis Khismatullin	RUS	2654	5½	2605
38	Hou Yifan	CHN	2683	5½	2591
39	Krishnan Sasikiran	IND	2638	5½	2571
40	Shardul Gagare	IND	2470	5	2706
41	Saleh Salem	UAE	2622	5	2658
42	Matthias Bluebaum	GER	2590	5	2654
43	Evgeny Tomashevsky	RUS	2744	5	2626
44	Chithambaram Aravindh	IND	2486	5	2612
45	Mohammed Al-Sayed	QAT	2520	5	2606
46	Aleksandr Lenderman	USA	2626	5	2570
47	Moulthun Ly	AUS	2462	5	2569
48	Mateusz Bartel	POL	2620	5	2565
49	Daniil Dubov	RUS	2655	5	2562
50	Alexander Moiseenko	UKR	2689	5	2551

132 players, 9 rounds

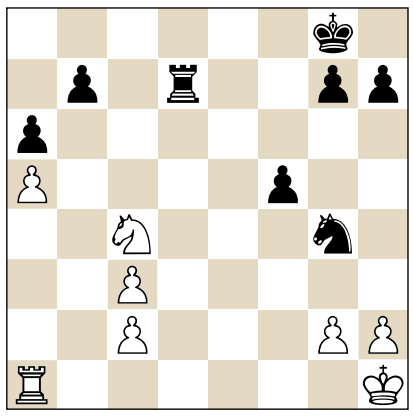
21...♗xf6 22.exd5 ♗g4 23.♘de4 ♗e7 24.♗xg4 ♕xg4 25.♕xg4 ♘xg4 26.d6 ♗f8 27.♗b6



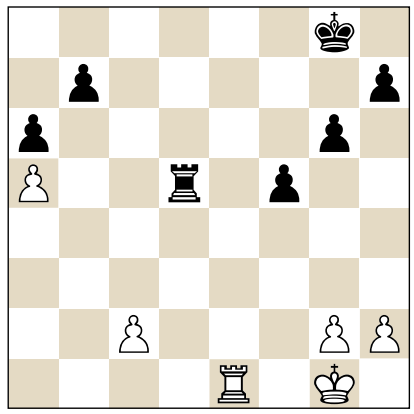
The d-pawn may seem quite mighty here, but a few precise moves are to follow. **27...f5! 28.d7 ♖ed8! 29.♗xd8 ♖xd8 30.♘d2**



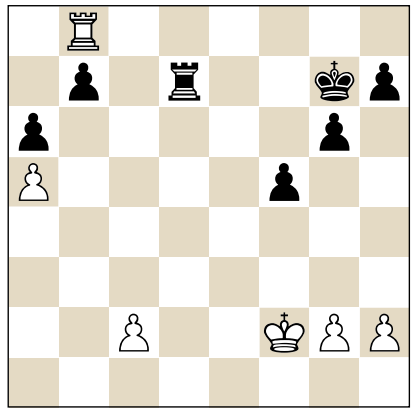
30...♗b4!? A nice touch.
31.♘c4 ♗xc3 32.bxc3 ♖xd7



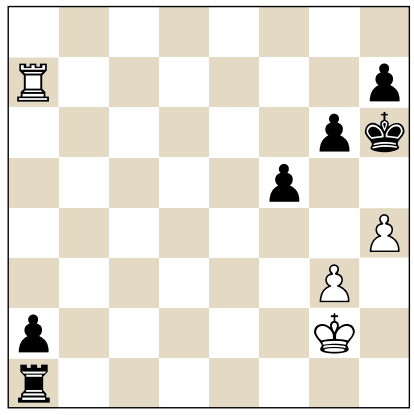
This endgame should by no means be lost when you face a player 300 Elo points below you, but if you see the rest of the game, it is not at all clear who was the top player and who the underdog.
33.♖e1 ♘f2+ 34.♔g1 ♘e4 35.♘e3 g6 36.c4 ♘c3 37.♘d5 ♘xd5 38.cxd5 ♖xd5



39.♖e8+? 39.♖e7! would probably hold. In any case it had to be played. In fact it's quite shocking that it wasn't.
39...♔f7 40.♖h8 ♔g7 41.♖b8 ♖d7 42.♔f2?



42...♖c7 The rest is easy. **43.♔e3** 43.♔f3 is met by 43...♔h6!. **43...♖xc2 44.♖xb7+ ♔h6 45.♔f3 ♖c3+ 46.♔f4 ♖a3 47.g3 ♖xa5 48.h4 ♖a3 49.♖a7 a5 50.♖b7 ♖a1 51.♔f3 a4 52.♖a7 a3 53.♔g2 a2**



In such positions all Black needs is a passed f-pawn to later distract the white king from the h2-g2 squares (both a passed g- or h-pawn yield nothing). **54.♔h2 g5 55.♖a6+ ♔h5 56.hxg5 ♔xg5 57.♖a7 h5 58.♖a4 h4 59.gxh4+ ♔h5 60.♔h3 ♖h1+** White resigned. ■

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with Maxim Notkin

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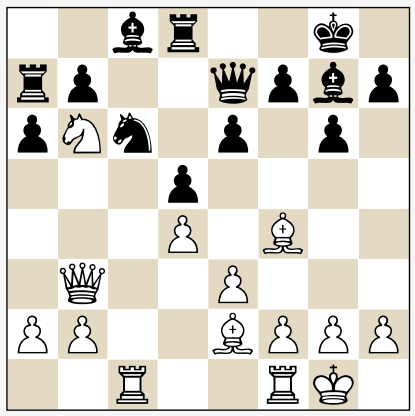
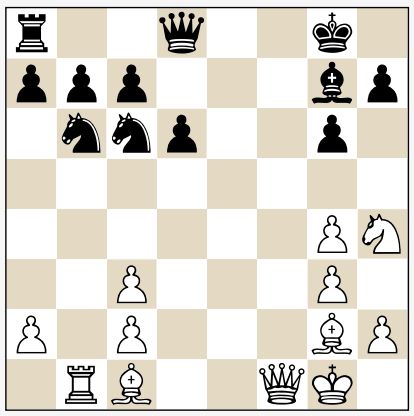
Find the best move in the positions below

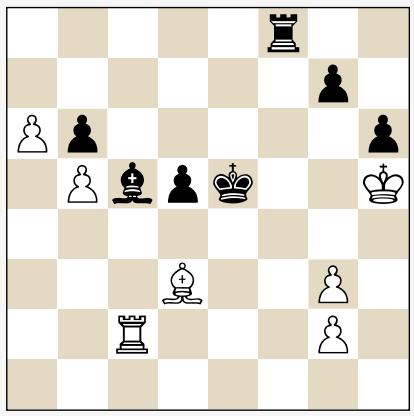
Solutions on page 105



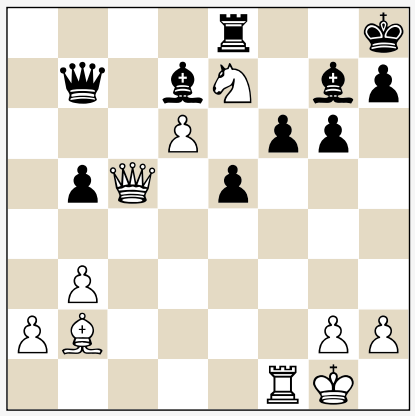
1. White to play



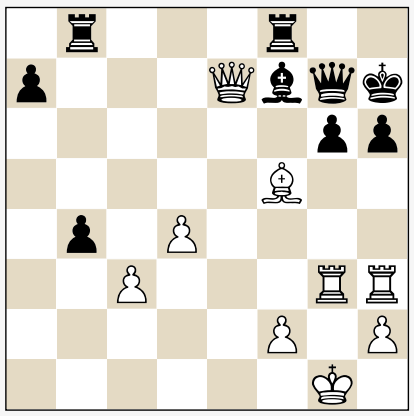
2. White to play



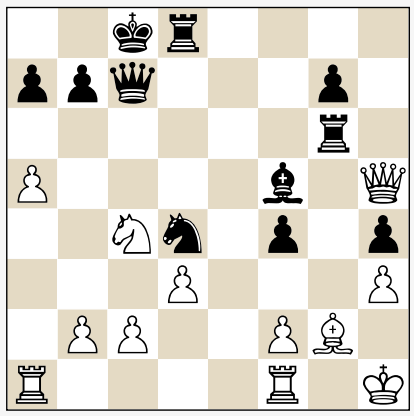
3. White to play



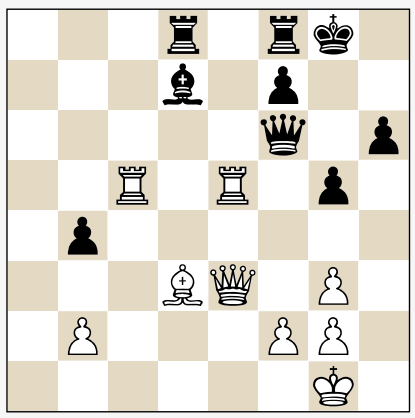
4. White to play



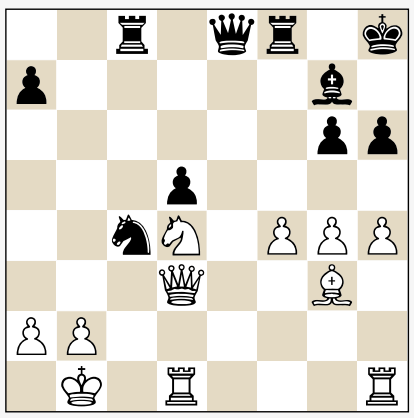
5. White to play



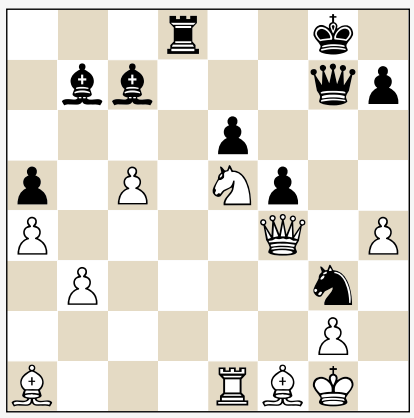
6. Black to play



7. White to play



8. Black to play



9. Black to play

ALL BLACK

I have it on good scientific authority that if you continue any further than New Zealand, you fall off the edge of the Earth. Or at least it felt that way after flying for well over a day to Auckland, from Athens, via Istanbul and Singapore, for the New Zealand Open. Doubtless, worse environments than aircraft cabins exist, but I can't think of any offhand.

I had made this journey before, in 2005, when a chance correspondence with an insurance broker, Chris Benson, led to a simul tour of Wellington, Hamilton, Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin. With hindsight, we would probably have made a small adjustment to the itinerary, but nevertheless it was a pretty successful and fun affair, especially considering that Chris had no experience of organizing such a thing. Initial fumbling led to one amusing incident from the first simul, in the capital Wellington: I had explicitly asked my opponents to be arranged in order of strength. This had been done, but they omitted to tell me where the best players were seated. I duly found myself essaying a reckless King's Gambit against FM Scott Wastney (Elo 2345) and could not understand why this supposed patzer was outplaying me comprehensively. I can brush it off with a smile now, but I confess to being a little irked at the time.

By unusual coincidence, as I learned from Tim Harding's recent stupendous door-stopper of a book on Joseph Henry Blackburne, my great Lancashire predecessor was in extensive negotiation for a near-identical simul tour in 1885! A serious bout of illness had led to him, on medical advice, fleeing the inclement British weather for the warmth of the Antipodes. However, the side trip from Australia to New Zealand was either too time-consuming or insufficiently remunerative, and it eventually fell through. After four months down-under, this giant of Victorian chess sailed back to Europe and the opportunity to promote chess in this far-flung corner of the Empire was gone. Had Blackburne made the trip across the Tasman Sea, he would have found a small but already well-organised chess community. Impressively, the national championship had started as early as 1879. By contrast, the British Championship did not begin until the foundation of the federation in 1904.

Life, for this weary, jet-lagged traveller, immediately perked up once settled and rested in a comfortable, spacious house, owned by Murray Chandler, New Zealand's only grandmaster, in the leafy suburb of Devonport – just a short, scenic ferry ride from the Central Business District. Alongside his secondary business – a stake in Gambit Publications Ltd. with Doctor John Nunn – Murray has accumulated a fairly substantial property portfolio over the years. Most purchases have been excellent investments, but in 2013, in a moment of rashness, or possibly insanity, he acquired the deconsecrated church of St. Paul's, nestled picturesquely, as Malcolm Lowry would have approved, under the volcano of Mount Victoria. In 2014, I had the honour of opening the new National Chess Centre there, on my second visit to the country.

Murray the prosperous landlord has come a long way from the impecunious young man I first encountered four decades ago. In 1975, at the age of 15, he travelled to Tjentiste, Yugoslavia, to compete in the World Junior Championship. Murray's mother relates that she went to the airport to collect her son upon his supposed return, only to find his embarrassed second, Philip Clark, who had been entrusted to take care of the boy, getting off the plane alone. With a bold, independent spirit that few kids of that tender age possess, Murray had continued on to England to further his chess development, as another Kiwi, Bob Wade, had done in the 1940s. Short and shoeless, like a hobbit, the newcomer made a strange impression at first. I recall the Chorley chess promoter Eric Wandless Renton (who would later be brutally murdered in a robbery at his home) telling with shock and dismay how Murray had even gone fellwalking in his bare feet. The youngster was soon persuaded that in Britain such bohemian practices were frowned upon in polite circles, and quietly encouraged to don footwear. Alas, adaptation to life in Britain required more than sartorial supplementation: upon realizing that, as a minor, he had the legal obligation to attend school in the UK if he remained, Murray sensibly preferred to return home to complete his education. However, it was not long before he came back, this time for an extended stay and eventual citizenship. He went on to numerous triumphs, including becoming an essential component of the hugely successful England team of the 1980s. I might add, he was also my second for the Biel Interzonal in 1985, from which I became the first Eng-

lishman to qualify for the Candidates. He has now retired from playing, but his involvement in the game is multi-layered and deep. Indeed, for his sins, he has also just been elected as President of the NZ Federation.

The most important event of the fortnight was, of course, not the tournament itself, but the Pizza, Pool and Pool Party on New Year's Eve, prior to the first round, at yet another of Murray's properties – one in which he actually resides. Why anyone should wish to move from such a glorious, waterfront location, with splendid views of Auckland Harbour Bridge and the city skyscrapers, I don't know, but this restless soul will soon vacate it to move into the centre of town.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Polar expeditions of Ernest Shackleton, Robert Scott and many others have begun from this country, the sun shone brightly on our party of revellers throughout the afternoon. Unfortunately the supposed climax of the day, a firework display from Sky Tower at the stroke of midnight, was so subdued that it was unclear why the municipality had bothered at all.

The tournament was expected to be dominated by the smattering of foreign GMs, and so it proved. The exotic location and very modest prize fund ensured these were disproportionately holidaying couples – Alexander Fier and Nino Maisuradze; Matthieu Cornette and Deimante Daulyte; Ma Qun and Ju Wenjun – rather than the usual scavenging professionals. As top seed, I got off to a good start before a defeat at the hands of the women's world number 3 pegged me back. Ju Wenjun had a great result overall, but was not quite able to emulate the feat of her countrywoman, Zhao Xue, of winning the tournament, though, on account of losing to the Kiwi-in-law, Gawain Jones, in the next round.

My England team-mate was in excellent form. Apart from a little wobble against Fier in the final game, he looked confident and assured. His outright victory was well-deserved. The two Chinese grandmasters finished half a point behind on 7/9, as did your writer. It was a pity that I wasn't paired against Gawain, although I would have been had there been an extra round. I cannot really complain of bad luck because there are always a few oddities in the Swiss System.

'As the pulchritudinous lawyer and NZ international squirmed while facing the inevitable mate, the cameras lapped up the full drama.'

So, the tournament ended, but not the chess. After my 'Vive la Différence' article (see New In Chess 2015/2) on the sexes created a worldwide media storm last year, Murray conceived the original idea of me giving a simul entirely against female opponents. As New Zealand was the country where I had repeatedly been called a 'twat' on television, I accepted immediately, in anticipation of some spicy coverage. Natasha Fairley secured the prestigious location in Aotea Square, slap-bang in the centre of Auckland. The 20 places were eagerly filled. The stage was set.

At first there didn't seem to be a lot of press interest. Then a massive two-page article in the prestigious *Sunday Star Times* slowly started the phones ringing. By the morning of the event, media had descended en masse – surpassing the expectations of even the optimists. While we would have snatched a couple of minutes on TV1 with glee, they actually filmed for an hour and a half. Murray seemed as surprised as anyone when a Chinese TV crew appeared. Both the players and I were inundated with interviews both before and afterwards.

As if to script, the exhibition culminated in a one-on-one with Natasha Fairley, herself something of a TV star due to an (unsuccessful) appearance on a slightly degrading programme called 'The Bachelor' in which dozens of nubile young women compete for the affections of a guy with money. As the pulchritudinous lawyer and NZ international squirmed while facing the inevitable mate, the cameras lapped up the full drama. Her resignation completed the clean-sweep.

Call it a gimmick, but at least two ladies came out of (premature) retirement for this event, while the youngsters – a couple of whom showed real promise – were greatly encouraged. In other words, it was a notable success. Of course, I could have instead delivered a politically-correct lecture on the benefits of chess in education, as one detractor ridiculously suggested. But then again, nobody would have given a flying fig. ■

Mikhail Chigorin the father of Russian chess

Mikhail Chigorin (1850-1908) was Russia's first world-class grandmaster and one of the greatest attacking players of all time. Curiously, it seemed that the impact of his surprising tactics in competitive play was mirrored by the blows he personally had to take in the rough and tumble of real life. **JIMMY ADAMS** records some of the shockwaves that were both sent and felt by Chigorin, on and off the chessboard, throughout his stormy career.

Mikhail Chigorin had a shocking childhood. Already by the time he was eight years of age, he had experienced the untimely death of both his parents, after which he was condemned for many years to a miserable existence in a depressing orphanage. The Nikolaevsky Orphans' Institute – named after the state executioner! – proudly claimed to turn out 'loyal servants of the Czar', but in reality subjected the pupils to provocative fault-finding and rampant brutality as well as wretched teaching and a daily diet which all too often included watery soup, stale porridge, rancid butter and mouldy bread.

One night a group of seven boys, including the 17-year-old Chigorin, decided they could take no more and, fuelled by their pent-up frustration, marched to the office of the Director, demanding that he release from the punishment cell one of their classmates whom he had threatened to hand over to the soldiers for refusing to kiss the hand of a priest after divine service. Upon being met with a negative response, the angry young men promptly doused all the lamps and proceeded to beat up Mr Dolivo-Dobrovolsky mercilessly until he lost consciousness and collapsed to the floor in a half-dead condition.

What made the attack even more serious was that this Director happened to be a personal friend of Czar Alexander II. Indeed, if the incident had occurred a decade or so previously, it would have meant not just imprisonment, but a far worse fate for the boys. However, defeat in the

Crimean War had given rise to a mood of reaction amongst the Russian population and, not wishing to wash their dirty linen in public, the authorities decided instead to hush things up and expel the assailants, providing them with certificates exempting them from taking their final exams but binding them to an agreement that they kept their mouths shut about the whole affair.

Nevertheless, despite all the oppression, something positive did come out of the Orphanage: Mr. Schuman, a good-natured German language teacher, taught the teenage Chigorin how to play chess...

After leaving the Orphanage, it took Chigorin three years to get a regular job, in the office of a government department, and a similar period of time after that to become re-acquainted with chess. This came about in the early 1870s when he happened to visit the Café Dominic on Nevsky Prospect in the heart of St. Petersburg, where the game was played daily, albeit mostly at 'odds' between opponents of widely different strengths and for money stakes. And it was here, during the period 1873-1874, that Chigorin rapidly increased his playing strength from 5th to 1st category.

It did not take long for Chigorin to make up his mind that chess deserved to be treated with far more respect than just a coffee house game: 'What strong nerves, what a hard head a chess player had to have to play at the Dominic! ... It is hard to imagine that playing in such unfavourable conditions would be a combination of correctness and grace.' In fact it was precisely his dissatisfaction with the stuffy, smoky, rowdy atmosphere at the Dominic, made even worse by the clicking of dominoes, rattling of dice and knocking of billiard balls, that later prompted him to spend a great part of his life unselfishly trying to raise the standards of both play and conditions of play in Russia.

Astonishingly, at such an early stage of his chess career, Chigorin also launched his own chess magazine in the hope that it would not only broaden interest in chess but also help to unite chess players from all over the country and promote the formation of a Russian Chess Union – something which, however, was only realised after his death.

Chigorin's wide-ranging *Chess Sheet (Shakhmatny Listok)*, containing news, annotated games, instruction in opening and endgame play and even historical and literary articles, ran from 1876-1881, after which it ceased publication because the total number of subscribers fell well short of the 250 that were needed to break even – and this despite the fact that Chigorin received no payment himself for his role of editor, writer and compiler. To add insult to injury, a last-ditch appeal to readers to help save the magazine merely resulted in a decrease in the number of subscribers!

'It did not take long for Chigorin to make up his mind that chess deserved to be treated with far more respect than just a coffee house game.'

From his very earliest days at the Dominic, Chigorin knew that the man to beat was the cultured and multi-talented Emanuel Schiffers, who was the same age as him but had the advantage of a good education, solid family background and ten more years playing experience. Later, Chigorin reflected nostalgically: 'Many times I overspent, paying Schiffers 25 kopeks for knowledge, and being left at times without even a slice of bread and butter – but successes came my way. I passionately loved and valued chess, and the first, far from lucky victory over the strongest player in Russia was achieved by me with exceptional joy and predestined my fate.'

■ ■ ■

In August 1881, Chigorin requested a month's leave from his employer and for the first time in his life set off for an international tournament, in Berlin, entirely at his own expense and on his own paltry salary. He stunned the other competitors by coming 3rd, behind only the great Blackburne and Zukertort, who subsequently wrote: 'Russia's representative, Mr. Chigorin, is generally admitted to be the coming man. His style is dashing, his combinations very ingenious, but a little too daring. We congratulate him on his splendid debut... We knew him only as a local celebrity, but with one leap he has bounded into the ranks of the masters.'

If Chigorin's sensational entrance into the world of international chess at Berlin had come as a big surprise to his new-found rivals, then they must have been shocked by his following performance in Vienna in the spring of 1882, where he scored only 14 points from 34 games and finished in the bottom half of the table. Nevertheless this did include wins against both Steinitz and Zukertort, who played a world title match four years later.

But why did Chigorin have such a poor result in this giant 18-player double-rounder? Well, he understood the reason to be chronic fatigue due to burning the candle at both ends for too long a time. Therefore, after careful deliberation, on 22 February 1883, whilst in the process of accepting

Hastings 1895 could have been Chigorin's greatest triumph if he had not suffered a silly loss against Janowski. The photo shows: Standing (l. to r.): Albin, Schlechter, Janowski, Marco, Blackburne, Maroczy, Schiffers, Gunsberg, Burn and Tinsley. Seated: Vergani, Steinitz, Chigorin, Lasker, Pillsbury, Tarrasch, Mieses and Teichmann.

an invitation to play in a forthcoming tournament in London, he gave notice of leaving his day job to devote himself exclusively to chess. This might have seemed a reckless decision for a man who had previously endured years of poverty and unemployment, but, then again, Chigorin had an irresistible calling to chess...

A couple of months later, refreshed after being freed from his bureaucratic drudge, Chigorin returned to top form in the 14-player double-round tournament in London 1883. Here, he finished 4th behind the runaway winner Zukertort, and second and third placed Steinitz and Blackburne. But, as shown by subsequent events, what proved to be most significant of all were his startling two victories over World Champion Steinitz. Yet, for the next six years Chigorin did not leave his native land and did not play in any international competitions!

Why? Well, with incredible selflessness for a sportsman in his prime, Chigorin considered that more important than any personal interests was to give priority to the organization and development of chess in Russia.

By 1886 Chigorin had established a comfortably accommodated, well-equipped and officially regulated chess club in St.Petersburg and in order to demonstrate its playing strength on the international stage he arranged a correspondence match against London, then the centre of world chess, with five members of each opposing team casting their votes on the moves to be played.

But right from the start Chigorin showed a blatant disregard of protocol. Undoubtedly with the good intention of achieving a prestigious result for Russia, he breached the 'sacred right' of the other team members by proceeding to dictate the course of play all by himself, right down to personally telegraphing the moves to London! Indeed, one of the team members, Simon Alapin, proud of his own analytical ability and already jealous of Chigorin's successes, deeply resented being excluded from the process of selecting the moves and thereafter harboured a deep grudge against Chigorin, which was to manifest itself in a series of malicious acts.

In the event, St.Petersburg, or if you like, Chigorin, won one of the correspondence games while the second remained unfinished and was adjudicated a draw. Chigorin's reaction to this decision was to publish analysis contending that the position was really a win for St.Petersburg, but his 'appeal' was ignored and the result of the game left unresolved. Astonishingly it took another hundred years for the pronouncement of a final verdict, when Russian endgame specialists Levenfish and Smyslov found a drawing resource for London!

The matter of increasing the membership of the St.Petersburg club was met with disappointment when squabbles flared up between the 'Chigorins' and the 'Alapiners'. This even concerned the government of the club and stubborn opposition to Chigorin himself, who was accused of abruptness and tactlessness with respect to the weaker chess-playing members of the club. And, of course, the matter of

the correspondence match was raised with Chigorin being accused of 'totally exclusive disregard to somebody else's opinion'!

All this led to a split, with the Alapin rebels forming a separate club of their own – which however did not last very long. Meanwhile Chigorin maintained his own loyal band of supporters.

In 1888, following Steinitz's successful tour of Cuba, the Havana Chess Club expressed their wish to hold a world title match and the champion was invited to name his opponent. It cannot be very often in sport that it is the challenger who is officially challenged, but, bearing in mind his 1-3 negative score against Chigorin, it was the Russian whom Steinitz named. Such was Chigorin's reputation despite his five-year absence from international chess.

Steinitz also put forward the argument that the match would represent a clash between two opposing schools of chess. Whereas he was the founder of a new and 'correct' positional school of chess, his opponent's preference was for the combinational style of play.

Chigorin was backed by funds raised in both Cuba and Russia. However, present-day readers may be unaware that this money was not a donation, but an ordinary speculation. If a chess player, who held a stake, gained victory in a match then the 'shareholder' not only received his money back, but also got an extra 50 per cent. Meanwhile the winner himself earned only half of the payment made by the defeated opponent.

> 'Even when he arrived in Havana he could not acclimatise to the intensely hot weather and local food and played the whole match in a half-sick condition.'

Chigorin set sail at the beginning of December to America, but, due to insufficient funds, not on a solid liner from Le Havre, but on a shabby cargo ship from Copenhagen. The Atlantic crossing, instead of the usual 16 days, lasted 23, and over a 24-hour period a fierce storm blew up, causing a lot of damage to the ship and worry to Chigorin that it was about to sink.

The turbulent voyage denied Chigorin the possibility of rest and match preparation. In fact it left him physically and mentally exhausted, which inevitably played a fatal role in his struggle for the World Championship.

Even when he arrived in Havana he could not acclimatise to the intensely hot weather and local food and he played the whole match in a half-sick condition.

Chigorin's strength was enough only for a decent start; he won the 1st, 3rd, 6th and 7th games, but then lost three games in a row and weakened sharply, while at the very end he again suffered three defeats. The match, which began on 20 January 1889, finished on 24 February with a victory for Steinitz by the score of 10½-6½.

Showing remarkable powers of recovery, only a month after playing 17 stressful games in his world title match against Steinitz, Chigorin played 46(!) more in New York – and won the tournament as well. Incidentally, even more demanding was his schedule in 1898, when the day after he completed 36 games in Vienna, Chigorin travelled to the tournament in Cologne to play another 16, making an unbroken run of 52 consecutive official games.

■ ■ ■

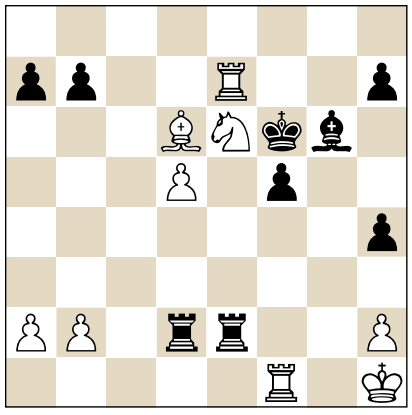
In 1892 Chigorin got a second chance to challenge Steinitz. Here, Panov relates an act of treachery by Alapin, on the eve of the title clash in Havana: 'One day at the beginning of the match, Steinitz, in the presence of the local chess players, said, laughingly, to Chigorin, whom he greatly respected, that he had received many warnings – some of which were sent from St.Petersburg – not to play his favourite Steinitz Variation of the Evans Gambit in the match. Together with these warnings, there arrived in Cuba, from the Russian capital, a bulky packet from Alapin, containing a detailed analysis of the Sanders Defence in the Evans Gambit, which Alapin considered more reliable than the line which Steinitz had played against Chigorin in past contests.

Chigorin wrote from Havana, in the St.Petersburg *Chess Journal*: 'Here, in Havana, Alapin's conduct is looked upon as a betrayal of his native land (if he recognises it as such). In the present case, to a certain extent it is possible to relate his action to a war, where, for the delivery of a plan of campaign to an enemy, a traitor was executed.'

As for the match itself, it was as close as could be. In the 23rd game of this thrilling duel Chigorin was about to equalise the score when disaster struck.

The Cuban master Vasquez described what happened: 'We could hardly ever forget this fatal moment! More than a thousand spectators were present at the 23rd game. All were engaged in lively discussion on Chigorin's brilliant campaign and were expecting that Steinitz was just about to resign the game. And then suddenly there was universal agitation! The public jumped up from their places, seeing that the Russian master, nervous and with a changed countenance, was clutching his head

in horror. Without any necessity he had moved away his bishop defending his king from mate. What a pity! – repeated a hundred voices. What a disappointing end to a splendid match for the world championship!'



Chigorin-Steinitz
Havana 1892
World Championship 23rd game
position after 31...♖cd2

32.♗b4?? After this horrendous mistake Black can now mate in two moves. A tragedy! Chigorin ascribed his blunder to the tropical heat in Havana and a complete collapse of his strength because of this. By means of 32.♖xb7 ♗h5 33.♖b3 ♗f7 34.♘f4!! (if 34.♘c7? then 34...♖xd5 35.♘xd5+ ♗xd5+ 36.♖ff3 h3! and White cannot win) White can win in the following interesting fashion: 34...♖xh2+ (here and in the future it is not possible to play 34...♖xb2 because of 35.♖xb2 ♖xb2 36.♗e5+ ♔xe5 37.♘d3+) 35.♔g1; now a knight check is threatened and against this he can do nothing. **32...♖xh2+ 0-1**

■ ■ ■

Chigorin was always in need of money, yet paradoxically was himself generous in making donations to worthy chess causes. Once, when his friend Chizh asked him whether he was going to take part in a projected international tournament, Chigorin replied: 'It is my duty! Only, money, money, money...' and he held his head. 'Do you know what I have to resort to? I have some earlier copies left of the magazine and I will be distributing these. 'From M.I. Chigorin to so and so with fond memories' and they will give some three, some five roubles. This is how I will pay my travelling expenses.' And when Chizh enquired – why do the Chess Society and the rich amateurs not give you support? 'By word of mouth – any amount. But when it comes down to business – a pittance!' replied Chigorin.

By this time Dr. Tarrasch had won a number of major tournaments and considered himself the best player in the world. But before he could challenge the World Champion, Steinitz, he first needed to prove his superiority over Chigorin.

Clash of the Titans: the world title was only decided after a dramatic end to the 23rd match game.

The Tarrasch-Chigorin match, held in St. Petersburg 1893, turned out to be a thrilling encounter. However, playing in his home town proved to be a major disadvantage for Chigorin. *Chess Journal* wrote: 'Remembering the rather numerous people envious of Chigorin, the lack of sympathy towards him repeatedly became apparent even during the course of the match. If Chigorin stood to lose just one game, and, the more so, two in succession, people – even those outside the walls of the club and in the company of persons understanding nothing about chess – loudly and with aplomb expressed their censure of him, saying that Chigorin obviously played weakly, that he would lose the match and that this failure would reflect on Russian chess society, etc.'

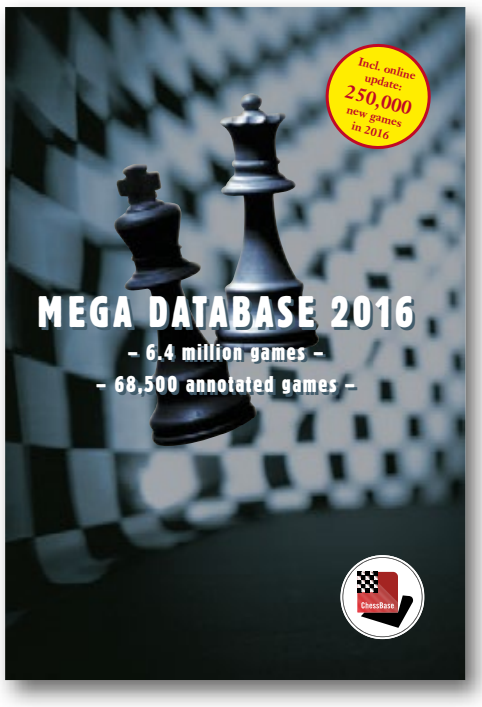
Nevertheless Chigorin had the last laugh. He scored 4 wins in the last 5 games and brought the match to a drawn conclusion, +9 –9 =4, after which a badly shaken Tarrasch declined an invitation to continue the struggle into extra time in order to obtain a decisive result. Particularly effective was Chigorin's stunning innovation 1.e4 e6 2.♕e2, planning to meet 2...d5 with 3.d3 and g3, and a formation resembling what much later came to be known as the King's Indian Attack. This came as a complete shock to Tarrasch and left his favourite French Defence without most of its customary features. This suited Chigorin more than it did Tarrasch, and in the 10 games in which the move 2.♕e2 was played, Chigorin made a plus score of 5 wins, against 3 losses with only 2 games ending in a draw.

■ ■ ■

Two rounds before the end of the mighty Hastings 1895 tournament, Chigorin outdistanced all his rivals and it seemed as if he had 1st prize in his pocket, having already defeated principal rivals such as Lasker, Pillsbury and Tarrasch. But then, in this 20th round, against lowly placed Janowski, he played so uncharacteristically weakly that he was forced to resign after only 16 moves, though he chose as White the 'Vienna Game', of which he had an excellent knowledge.

It was said that on the eve of this game, admirers held a celebration for

Mega Database 2016



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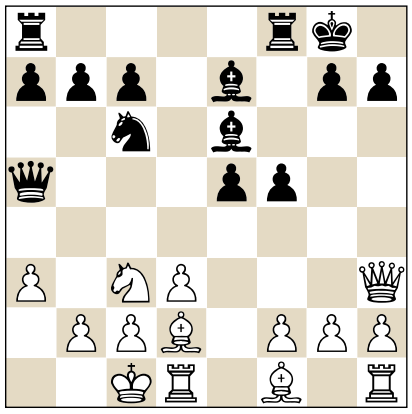
Chigorin with plentiful supper and wine. The next day Chigorin played in a state of a horrible hangover. Publishing the game in *New Times*, he gave 8(!) question marks to his 16 moves, and understandably so.

Mikhail Chigorin
Dawid Janowski
Hastings 1895

1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.d3 d5 4.exd5? ♘xd5 5.♕e2? ♘c6 6.♗d2? ♗e7 7.0-0-0? 0-0 8.♕f3?? ♗e6 9.♘ge2 f5 10.♕h3 ♕d6 11.♘xd5? ♕xd5 12.♘c3 ♕a5 13.a3?



13...♗xa3 14.♘b1 ♗xb2+ 15.♔xb2 ♕a2+ 16.♔c1 ♘d4 0-1

Chigorin's lifelong addiction to alcohol, which started in his Dominic years, was well known, but at the beginning and at the zenith of his chess career he refrained from drinking during competitions. However, for some inexplicable reason, here he seems to have lapsed on the eve of what would have been his greatest tournament victory.

As Panov put it: 'When a man abstains from unhealthy habits for a long time and then, suddenly, by a freak of chance, returns to them, it rages in him like a forest fire!'

The squandered point cost Chigorin dearly! In the same round, Pillsbury overtook him. Though Chigorin won in the last round in excellent style against Schlechter, Pillsbury also won, gaining first prize. Chigorin was left as runner-up, Lasker took 3rd place, Tarrasch 4th.

■ ■ ■

It was Chigorin himself who initiated the St. Petersburg 1895/96 tournament, with the participation of the highest scoring players at Hastings: Lasker, Steinitz, Pillsbury and himself. Tarrasch could not play due to the demands of his medical practice.

Playing in his home town and burdened by organisational chores, Chigorin started exceptionally badly, scoring in the first half only 1½ points from 9 encounters, even losing every game in the third circuit. Though he recovered well in the second half and scored 5½ points, it was not enough to save him from last place.

When he was asked why he had done so badly only a hundred days after his brilliant Hastings feat, Chigorin replied bitterly: 'I am even amazed that I did not lose every game. Going into play, whilst worrying over the fact that they want to evict you from your apartment because of non-payment of rent, and your wife comes to you with a bill which has to be paid quickly, and then also all around there is intrigue, gossip, nastiness...'

■ ■ ■

The first All-Russia tournament took place in September-October 1899, in Moscow. Though Chigorin won this important inaugural event with 10 points out of 11, the single game he lost, to Lebedev, led to an unexpected controversy in the press. In the newspaper *Russia*, an anonymous writer – probably Lebedev himself, or his friend Yurevich, who ran the chess column – declared that Lebedev was as good a player as Chigorin – and even implied that he was in the same league as other world-class players like Tarrasch and Pillsbury too!

All this hype might have died a death there and then, had it not been for the fact that Lebedev then caused an even greater sensation by beating Chigorin twice more in the following year's double round 'Strongest Players of St.Petersburg' tournament!

This prompted more comment from the pages of *Russia* stating that Chigorin was 'over-rated' and 'a non-entity' and that his shared first place was 'unexpected', as well as more spiteful comments.

Upon this latest tirade, a group of leading St.Petersburg players came to Chigorin's defence, responding with a lengthy letter of protest ending with the statement: 'Lebedev, despite winning three games against Chigorin, cannot be the equal of him or indeed of many other Russian chess players.'

To which Lebedev's personal response was ... outright verbal abuse! On the other hand, Chigorin preferred to settle the score by beating him in the next two All-Russia tournaments and in a few correspondence games besides.

Nevertheless it was because of such incidents that Chigorin, already from the end of the 1890s, distanced himself and kept aloof from the leaders of the St.Petersburg chess movement. He limited his participation to being an honorary member of the St.Petersburg Chess Assembly, organised in 1903, and just visited it now and then.

But this is not the last we hear of Yurevich and Lebedev. A scandal emerged after Chigorin published, in his *New Times* column, the brilliancy prize winning game between these two players in the 3rd All-Russia tournament in Kiev – adding that one of them had shown him the whole game even before it was played! In response to this, Yurevich wrote a letter to the newspaper denying the game was pre-arranged and that he intended to sue Chigorin for defamation. And, for good measure, he then accused Chigorin of buying his game in the same tournament from Lebedev!

Nothing of any legal consequence emerged from all this, but, curiously, the matter of staging games did resurface later after a further incident involving Prince Andrei Dadian, a Caucasian feudal lord whose hereditary rights to rule Mingrelia (in West-

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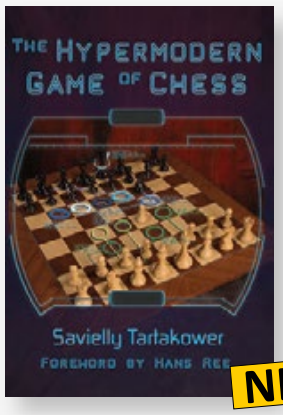

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ern Georgia) had been sold to the Czar for a large sum of money, whilst giving him the right to retain his title of 'Shining Prince'.

Dadian had entered into military service as an officer in the Russian army, transferring first to St.Petersburg and then to Kiev, in both of which cities he competed with some success in a few amateur chess tournaments. But, for the most part, because of his professional obligations, he played chess only in closed circles against opponents who were unknown to the chess world at large.

Nevertheless the Prince was an energetic self-publicist and would send the scores of his brilliant tactical wins to chess magazines for publication, whilst never forgetting to deposit a tidy sum of money in their bank accounts as a token of gratitude. Rumours even circulated that money was also paid to his 'opponents' for their assistance in these brilliant games... Or, even worse, that the games were completely fabricated, although no evidence of this has ever been produced.

On arrival, the Prince, who was both President and sponsor of the event, announced to the committee: 'It's either me or Chigorin!'

Anyway, at the turn of the new century Chigorin picked up some of these games, second hand, from the French magazine *La Stratégie* and annotated them for his *New Times* column. Though they were all Dadian wins, Chigorin added fresh analysis as well as correcting errors in the existing commentaries. It seems that the Prince, a man to whom honour was paramount, took exception even to the slightest criticism and was none too pleased with Chigorin's 'edited' version of his work.

Yet even more serious was his reaction when the local Kiev newspaper dared to publish one of Dadian's losses(!), following which he even challenged them to a duel!

When Chigorin visited Kiev for a promotional tour in 1902 he heard all about the Prince's hyper-sensitivity and vanity. Therefore, when he returned the following year to take part in the All-Russia tournament, he declined an invitation to visit him at his palatial home. However, according to Georgian custom, such a refusal is considered an insult and Dadian also clearly considered it as such.

Revenge was not long coming. After receiving an official invitation to the 1903 Monte Carlo tournament, Chigorin travelled all the way from St.Petersburg to commence play in the famous Casino. However, on arrival, the Prince, who was both President and sponsor of the event, announced to the committee: 'It's either me or Chigorin!'

The tournament committee, fearing the withdrawal of their sponsor, elected to sacrifice Chigorin, who was told he would not be allowed to play. None of the other competitors came to his defence, fearing that they too might be barred from playing if they raised any criticisms. And with good reason, as Tarrasch, Alapin and Janowski also found themselves blacklisted for making adverse comments about the organisation.

Lasker, Chigorin, Steinitz and Pillsbury at the 1895/96 St. Petersburg tournament. Burdened by organizational chores and personal worries, Chigorin had a disastrous result.

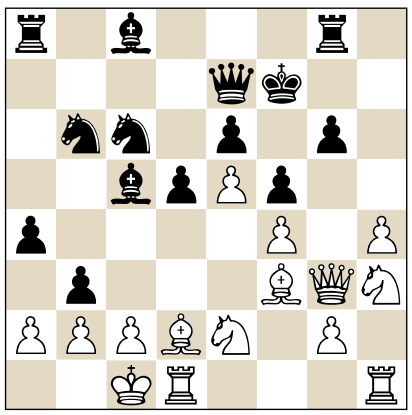
Chigorin spent a further two weeks in Monte Carlo, preparing legal action, before the Prince offered him the 1500 roubles he had sought as compensation. The bad feeling that had arisen was highlighted by Frank Marshall's comment that Chigorin and Dadian were repeatedly seen arguing with each other during the tournament.

In the end it was the Prince who came off worse after this shocking incident. Rumours that he had falsified his published games became even more pronounced and prevalent. One Czech magazine even suggested that Dadian could have saved himself a lot of trouble by not inviting any players to Monte Carlo and just fabricating all the games of the period of the tournament!

■ ■ ■

Chigorin knew very well that simultaneous exhibition tours had great propaganda value, and they attracted new members to the chess community. The Moscow chess player D.N.Pavlov graphically described a display given by Chigorin in Moscow 1891 as follows: 'And it had to be seen how, according to the state of play, this at first so calm face was transformed and turned into glowing colour with blazing dark eyes and an intense frown, every time Chigorin thought up some sort of stunning combination or complicated manoeuvre! It was obvious that he was totally absorbed by the progress of play, that the exhibition was not tedious hack work for him, as for the majority of chess professionals, but a new field for the manifestation of his creative nature.'

Chigorin was only too happy to publish the following game in his newspaper column. It must surely be one of the most brilliant finishes ever produced against him in a simultaneous exhibition.



Chigorin-Mundt
Simultaneous Exhibition, Lodz 1904

21.♔b1 21.♘g5+ loses to 21...♕xg5! and 22...bxa2. **21...♗a3! 22.h5 ♗xb2! 23.♔xb2 ♕a3+!! 24.♔xa3 ♘c4** Mate.

■ ■ ■

In the course of 1905, Chigorin's friends began to notice a change in his appearance. He had lost weight, the colour of his face was unhealthy, his nose became sharper and his eyes duller, always looking complacent, discreetly harbouring suffering. These were dreadful symptoms. Having earlier possessed great physical strength and a healthy complexion, Chigorin was now seriously ill and in the spring of that year he was diagnosed with two dangerous chronic diseases – cirrhosis of the liver and diabetes.

Amazingly, even when in such a desperately poor state of health, Chigorin picked himself up and continued not only to play chess but also to create original ideas, which were a source of inspiration for the young players who followed him.

For example, the young Spielmann, whose talent, as also his attitude to chess, had much in common with Chigorin's, wrote very emotively: 'At this time, he was already breaking down; he was suffering from liver disease, death was close at hand and he knew it. And indeed, four months after the end of the Carlsbad tournament he passed away. Though he knew death was near, this in no way gave rise to dejection in him – he was full of an unquenchable thirst for activity. It is possible that never in the whole of his glorious chess career did he take to chess so fervently as in the last months of his life; it was precisely then that the fanatical devotion to chess art and the passionate love of it, burned in him with particular brilliance. When his time was almost up, he endeavoured to devote all his remaining hours, minutes, seconds to chess, and likewise right up to his last breath. Almost 24 hours, round the clock, he spent at the chessboard: when I, a young master, was already dead tired, when my brain was totally clouded by the numerous combinations, Chigorin still felt in his element: he was indeed unquenchable, and, fascinated by him, I also untir-

ingly continued our joint analysis, our search for truth. It was not the awareness of his close death, but the awareness of his inevitably soon parting with chess, which aroused in him that intense, anxious searching, which was passed on also to us, excited us, giving rise to both confusion and joy.'

The last days of Chigorin were dramatically recorded by his daughter, Olga, in a remarkable article published on 2 February 1958 in the New York-based *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*. At this time, both Olga and Chigorin's estranged wife were living in Lublin. Here is a short extract: 'In 1908 my father arrived to visit us but was already very sick. He'd only just been discharged from hospital, it seems, as someone incurably ill with diabetes. He arrived on Christmas Eve, lay down and never got up again. I took turns with my mother at keeping watch by his bedside. He would incessantly either move the pieces of his travelling chess set, or hallucinate.

Once at night he called me and, pointing at his travelling chess set, told me: "Burn this chess set immediately."

I was shocked – his favourite chess set, which he was never separated from – how could I suddenly burn it! His wish could only be carried out in the morning, when the stoves were lit. He became oblivious, fell into a delirium and spoke to someone invisible only about chess.

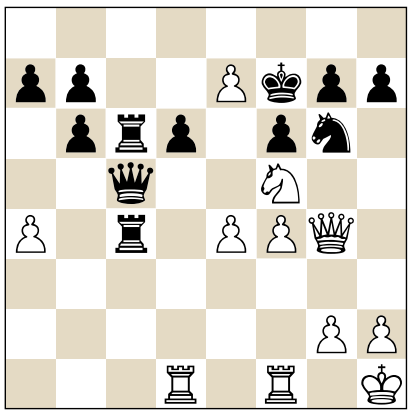
In the morning my mother and I decided that father might still get better and then he'd reproach us for carrying out his delirious fantasy. We decided first to burn the chessboard, but to retain the pieces for now. In the morning the first thing he did was to ask if I'd fulfilled his request. I paltered and quietly replied: "Yes", it was a white lie...'

It seems that the dramatic burning of the chess set symbolised Chigorin's recognition of his own impending death. Chigorin was buried in the Orthodox cemetery in Lublin, but later, just before the First World War and thanks to efforts of Russian chess players, his body was transferred to the Novodevichy Cemetery in St. Petersburg.

■ ■ ■

Here are three examples where Chigorin stunned his opponents with his surprise tactics. Interestingly, each of these games shows the influence his own play had on future champions.

Alexander Alekhine, with his fondness for mobile centre pawns, could well have played this game...



Chigorin-Pollock
New York 1889
position after 31...♖c6

(Notes by Vasyukov and Nikitin)
Black has just played 31...♖c6, defending the d6-pawn, and now threatens to take the e4- and a4-pawns. Apparently he is prepared to sacrifice the knight on g6, reckoning on also being able to capture the e7-pawn, e.g. 32.h4 ♖xe4 33.h5 d5 34.hxg6+ hxg6 35.♘h4 f5 36.♘xf5 gxf5 37.♕xf5+ ♔xe7 38.♖xd5 ♖h6+.

32.e5!! To break through at the strongest point is a sign of supreme mastery of the art of attack.

32...fxe5

The e5-square is defended four times, but it is no good taking the pawn:
– 32...dxe5 33.♖d8 ♖e6 (33...♘xe7 34.♕xg7+ ♔e6 35.♘xe7, with the threat of f5+, winning) 34.♖f8+! ♘xf8 35.♕xg7+;
– 32...♘xe5 33.♕xg7+;
– 32...♕xe5 33.♘xd6+ ♖xd6 34.fxe5 ♖xg4 35.exd6, or 34...♖xd1 35.♕xc4+.

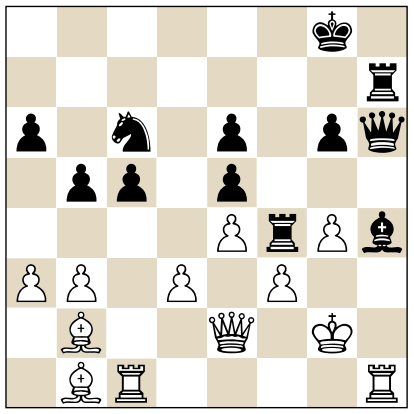
33.♘xd6+! ♖xd6 34.fxe5+ ♖f6 35.e8♕+! ♔xe8 36.♕d7+ ♔f8 37.exf6 1-0

Chigorin's splendidly conducted attack was enthusiastically praised by Spielmann: 'Chigorin's grandiose ingenuity is fascinating: each of his moves breathes creative strength and irresistible will to win.'

■ ■ ■

In the next game, dubbed 'The pearl of the match', Black's combination received high praise from contemporary commentators. Even the loser, Gunsberg, remarked: 'Combinations of this kind can be made only by a great master.'

In fact, Chigorin's method of blockade and breakthrough are very reminiscent of Nimzowitsch...



Gunsberg-Chigorin
2nd Match Game, Havana 1890
position after 35.♖h1

35...♖xf3!!

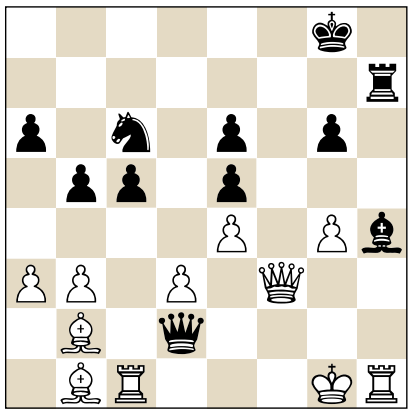
A terribly strong blow. The weakness of the dark squares is going to be White's downfall. To begin with, the d2-square is found to be quite unexpectedly fatal for him.

36.♕xf3

36.♖xh4 loses to both 36...♖g3+! 37.♔xg3 ♕xh4+ 38.♔f3 ♕h3+ 39.♔f2 ♖f7+ 40.♔e1 ♕g3+ 41.♔d1 ♖f2, winning the queen, and also the simple 36...♕xh4.
And if White captures the rook with

his king, 36.♔xf3, then 36...♕f4+ mates in four moves.

36...♕d2+ 37.♔g1

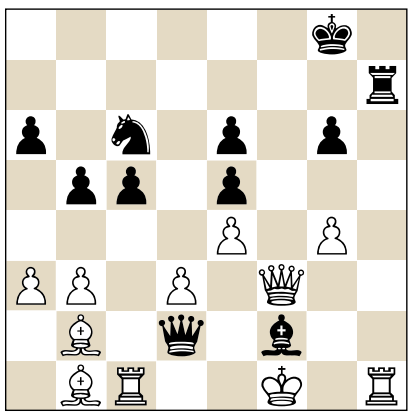


37...♗f2+! Elegant and at the same time necessary. Not 37...♕xb2?? because of 38.♖f1.

In this beautiful check, and also in the following knight move, lies the basis of the whole combination.

38.♔f1

The only move. On 38.♔g2, mate is forced by 38...♗e3+ and if 38.♕xf2, then 38...♖xh1+ 39.♔g2 ♖h2+.



38...♘d4!

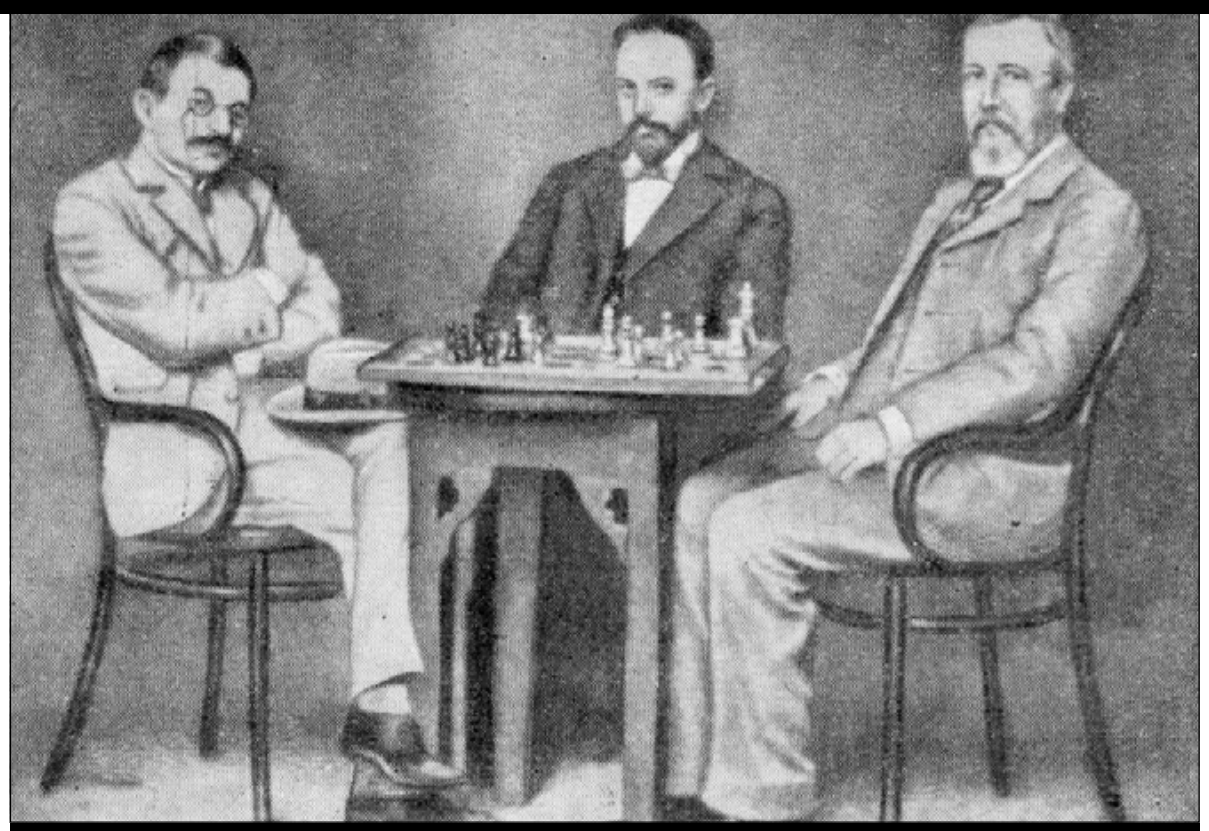
The final blow, this time based on the overloading theme. The ♗b2 has to abandon the rook on c1.

39.♗xd4 ♕xc1+ 40.♔e2 ♖xh1 41.♗xf2 ♕xb1 42.g5 ♕f1+ 0-1

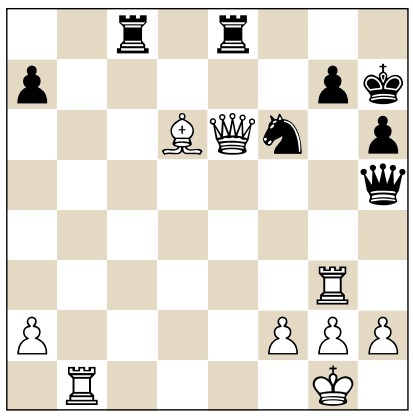
The middlegame is a classic example of the creation of play on the dark squares. There could follow 43.♔d2 ♖h2 44.♔e3 ♖h3 45.♗g3 ♕g1+ etc. The final attack is a real masterpiece.

■ ■ ■

Finally, Mikhail Tal would have felt very much at home playing the following game.



London 1899: three glorious names from the golden age of chess, Emanuel Lasker, Mikhail Chigorin and Joseph Blackburne.



Chigorin-Bird
New York 1889 (Round 36)
position after 33...♖he8

With his last move Black finally introduces (with tempo!) his king's rook into battle After a retreat of the queen, he reckoned on obtaining chances of counterattack by ...♘e4. However something quite different happens...

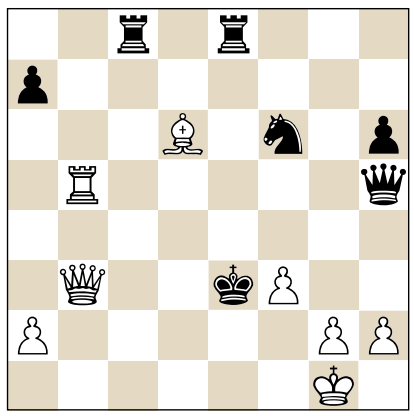
34.♖xg7+!!

A magnificent sacrifice. This combination required from Chigorin deep and accurate calculation, since it is carried out against a background of mating threats also against the white king.

34...♔xg7 35.♖b7+ ♔g6 36.♕f7+ ♔f5 37.♖b5+ ♔e4 38.f3+ ♔e3

After 38...♔d4, White can finish the game at once with 39.♖b4+ ♔d3 40.♕b3+ ♔e2 41.♕b2+ ♔d3 42.♖d4+ ♔e3 43.♗f4 mate. Although 38...♔d3 would have avoided being mated, his game would still be clearly lost.

39.♕b3+



39...♔e2 If 39...♔d2 40.♗f4+ ♔e1 (or 40 ...♔e2 41.♕b2+ followed by ♕d2+ etc.) 41.♕b1+ ♔e2 42.♕f1 mate.

40.♕b2+ ♔d3 A curious finish might have occurred if Black had played 40...♔d1; for after 41.♕b1+, the same kind of mate could be forced by White as in the actual play in reply to 41...♔e2 or 41...d2, but if 41...♖c1 42.♕d3+ ♔e1 43.♗g3 mate.

41.♕b1+ ♔e2 42.♖b2+ All this is splendid: White disdains winning the queen, having calculated to a nicety that he will drive the opponent into a fine mating net. **42...♔e3 43.♕e1+ ♔d4 44.♕d2+ ♔c4 45.♖b4** Mate. ■

Mikhail Chigorin: The Creative Chess Genius, compiled by Jimmy Adams, has just been published by New In Chess. This is a hugely expanded edition of that book which first appeared in 1987 and contains over 100 more annotated games as well as the addition of two comprehensive biographies depicting Chigorin's turbulent life.

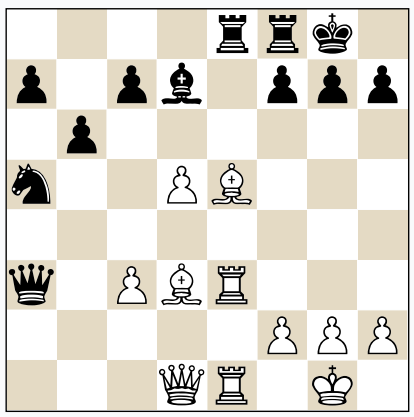
Judit Polgar

Bishops at their best

As a kid **JUDIT POLGAR** was not too fond of the bishop as an individual piece. The bishop *pair* was an entirely different story, of course.

For me the bishop was less mobile than the major pieces and had more predictable trajectories than the knight. The bishop's actions are usually of a static nature, which did not suit my dynamic attacking taste.

But bishops are unique with respect to other pieces because they complement each other's tasks when acting together. And my indifference regarding the bishop's virtues certainly vanished if there was a combination starting with ♗xh7+ in sight. Surprisingly, even at the top of my career I managed to catch a former World Champion unawares with a thematic combination known since Lasker-Bauer, Amsterdam 1889, and Nimzowitsch-Tarrasch, St. Petersburg 1914!



Polgar-Karpov
Hoogeveen 2003
position after 24.♖e3

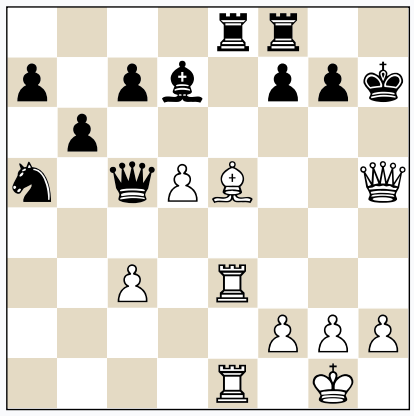
White's compensation for the pawn is beyond any doubt, but Black was by no means forced to hand in the game at once with:

24...♕c5?? For a few moments, I could not believe this was really happening. Black could have put up resistance with the strategically unappealing 24...g6, when I could have continued my attack with, say, 25.h4.

25.♗xh7+!

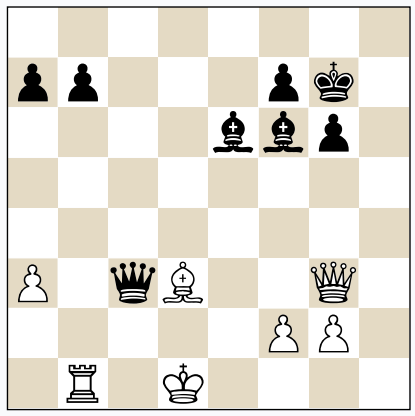
The dynamic burst of a basically static piece.

25...♔xh7 26.♕h5+



By now, Karpov had recovered from his moment of blindness (or oblivion) and resigned. With a rook on the third rank already, the combination was actually easier to calculate than in the classical examples: 26...♔g8 27.♗xg7! ♔xg7 28.♖g3+ ♔f6 29.♕g5 mate.

In the previous game I didn't mind sacrificing them after they had done their preliminary jobs, but in the next example, my favourite on this theme, the bishops were the true heroes of the final attack.



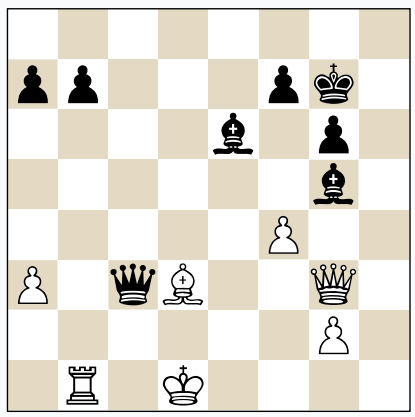
Motylev-Polgar
Kallithea 2002
position after 28.♔d1

This type of position helps us understand another aspect: bishops are much stronger if sustained by one of their bigger bros or sisses. In the absence of queens, White would have excellent winning chances, but in the game Black has a forced win.

28...♗g5! The first of a series of moves putting a bishop *en prise*. Black is threatening 29...♕d2 mate.

29.♔e2 If 29.♕xg5 ♕xd3+, 30.♕d2 is not possible because the rook is hanging, and after 30.♔c1 ♗f5 31.♖b2 ♕c3+ Black would win the rook anyway.

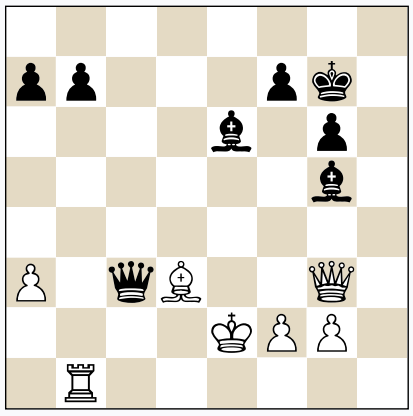
29.f4 would be an interesting way to change something in the dynamics of the position:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

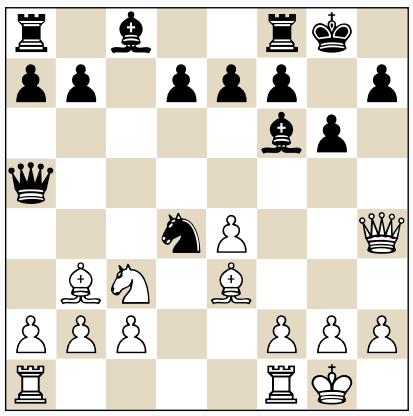
29...♗xf4 30.♕xf4 ♕xd3+ 31.♔c1. If 31...♗f5, White starts checking with 32.♕e5+, but I had planned 31...♕c3+ 32.♔d1 ♗b3+, when White would have

to get into a hopeless queen ending with 33.♖xb3, since 33.♔e2 ♕c2+ loses the rook.



29...♗g4+! The second shock. **30.♔f1** 30.♕xg4 loses all pieces to 30...♕d2+ 31.♔f1 (31.♔f3 ♕xd3, mate, is 'even worse') 31...♕xd3+.
30...♗f4! Since the white bishop and, implicitly, the rook are hanging, we could say that my undefended bishops trapped the white queen! 0-1.

The bishops can play completely different parts from those of the 'little brothers', too. If placed on dominating and invulnerable squares, all they need to do is supervise the attack of the rest of the pieces, like two generals directing their army from the top of a hill far from the actual battle. Here is a classic example:

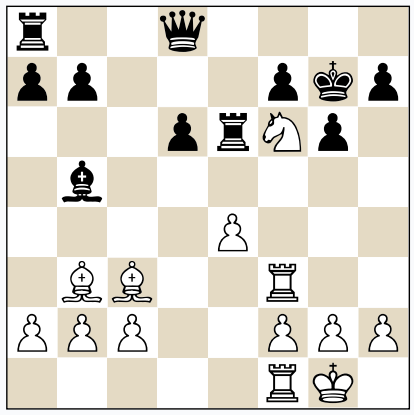


Nezhmetdinov-Chernikov
Rostov-on-Don 1962
position after 11...♗f6

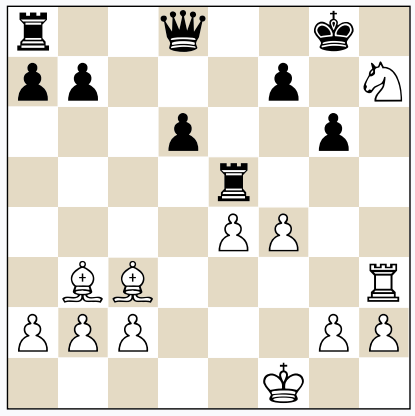
12.♕xf6!! A fantastic and entirely correct positional sacrifice, without any forced lines to justify it. Objectively, Black should be able to defend, but in practice it proved hard for him to cope with the bishops' pressure against the weakened king's position.

> 'Bishops are much stronger if sustained by one of their bigger bros or sis.'

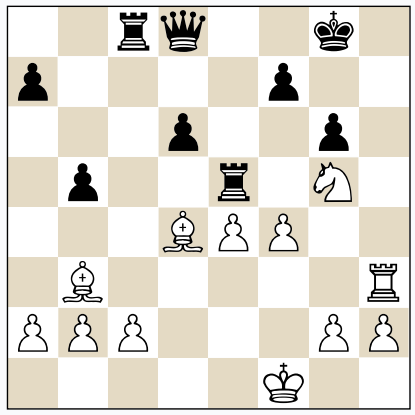
12...♘e2+ 13.♘xe2 exf6 14.♘c3 ♖e8 15.♘d5 ♖e6 16.♗d4 The start of a slow but effective plan based on involving all the pieces in the attack.
16...♔g7 17.♖ad1 d6 18.♖d3 ♗d7 19.♖f3 The pressure against the Achilles' heel in Black's position has reached its apogee.
19...♗b5 20.♗c3 ♕d8 21.♘xf6



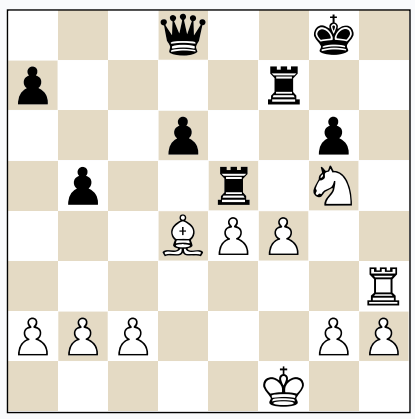
The attack has taken on alarming proportions, and this was the last moment when Black could have tried to neutralize the bishops at least partly.
21...♗e2?
The developing 21...♖c8!, threatening ...♖xc3, was the only way to hope for survival. After 22.♘e8+ (22.♗d4 allows Black to neutralize the other bishop with 22...♗c4) 22...♔g8 23.♗xe6 fxe6 24.♘f6+, White has a rook, knight and pawn for the queen, and a continuing initiative, but in view of ...♖xc3 or ...e6-e5 Black's position is defensible.
22.♘xh7+ ♔g8
22...♔xh7 allows a fantastic sequence: 23.♖xf7+ ♔h6 24.♗d2+ (finally the bishops start moving) 24...g5 25.♗xe6 ♗xf1 26.♗f5 ♕h8 27.h4, and wins (Nezhmetdinov).
23.♖h3 Even clearer would have been 23.♘f6+ ♔g7 24.♘d7+ ♔g8 25.♖h3.
23...♖e5 24.f4 ♗xf1
Here 24...♖h5 25.♘f6+ ♔f8 26.♘xh5 retrieves most of the material, with a continuing attack.
25.♔xf1



A fantastic position! Black has a huge material advantage but the bishops completely paralyse him.
25...♖c8 Too late. But after 25...♖h5 26.♘f6+ ♔f8 27.♘xh5 gxh5 28.♖xh5 ♔e7 29.♖h7, followed by ♖xf7+ and f4-f5-f6, things are not too rosy either.
26.♗d4 b5 27.♘g5



27...♖c7 It is too late for 27...♖c4 28.♗xc4 bxc4 29.♗xe5 dxe5 30.♖h8+!.
28.♗xf7+! Based on the same idea as the previous line. **28...♖xf7**



29.♖h8+!+ ♔xh8 30.♘xf7+ ♔h7 31.♘xd8 ♖xe4 32.♘c6 ♖xf4+ 33.♔e2 Black resigned. ■

And he did it again. Magnus Carlsen won his last game and next prevailed in the rapid tiebreak to win the London Chess Classic. Which was exactly what he needed to claim the 2015 Grand Chess Tour as well.

A long, long evening in London

After six rounds and six draws Magnus Carlsen knew that he could still win the 2015 London Chess Classic. And the 2015 Grand Chess Tour. Because he always keeps believing in his chances. Even so the World Champion must have felt deep relief, as well as the aftershocks of averted dangers, when on a dramatic last day, close to midnight, he sealed the coveted double victory.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

On the last day of the London Chess Classic, the spectators flocked in well before 2 p.m. in order not to miss any of the action at the Olympia Congress Centre. Several players could still win this 7th edition, and there was more than one scenario that would lead to tiebreak games and further excitement. The early rounds with their too many draws and too many Berlin Defences – or vice versa – had long been forgotten.

The scarce moments of excitement in those rounds had almost singlehandedly been provided by Veselin Topalov, who unfortunately did so at his own expense. The Bulgarian entered the Classic, the third and final leg of the Grand Chess Tour, as the leader in the overall standings, but never believed that he would be able to defend his position successfully. On more than one occasion he had said that second place was the highest that he could dream of, and even that remained a dream. As if he wanted to justify his modest expectations, Topalov was accountable for more than half of the decided games in the first five rounds. In Round 1, he lost to Anish Giri and, following a draw in the second round, he also went on to lose his next two games as Black against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Vishy Anand.

> ‘There was more than one scenario that would lead to tiebreak games and further excitement.’

Magnus Carlsen had to wait till Round 7 for his first victory. How-

ever, as the overall pace had been slow, he immediately was in contention for first place again. What's more, if he took first place here, he would also claim top honours in the Grand Chess Tour, wiping out his poor result (7th place, 4 losses) in the first leg in Norway.

Carlsen's Round 7 win against Hikaru Nakamura was a demonstration of superb endgame technique that left a deep impression on everyone (don't miss out on the chance to be guided through this game by Carlsen's second Peter Heine Nielsen in the analysis section!). The next day he tried another endgame grind against Veselin Topalov, but this time he was not only fighting his opponent. In a position that looked dead drawn, Carlsen manoeuvred with extreme patience. The progress he made was barely visible to the human eye, and just when he believed he had achieved the next tiny goal, he realized that the 50-rule move forced him to an exchange a pawn, an exchange that immediately put an end to his winning aspirations.

At the start of the last round, Anish Giri and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave shared the lead, half a point ahead of Carlsen, Grischuk and Aronian. Giri, the only unbeaten player in the Grand Chess Tour, reached plus-2 by outplaying Nakamura in the endgame in Round 8. MVL's second win had come a day earlier when Vishy Anand blundered in a sharp position. With Anand-Giri, Aronian-MVL and Carlsen-Grischuk on the menu, anything was still possible on the last day, even though it was not entirely clear to everyone what the various possible results would ultimately mean.

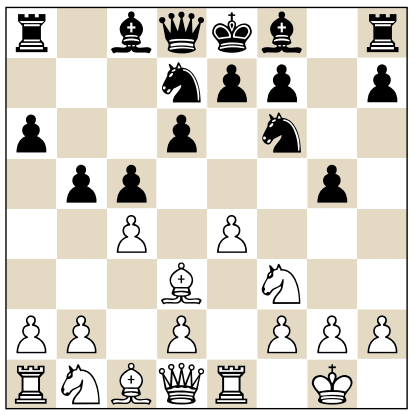
Particularly the effect of the possible outcomes on the final standings of the GCT caused some confusion. In the VIP-room, tournament director Malcolm Pein called on Peter Davies, the main sponsor of the Classic, to explain the rules to the assembled guests. Although he did so in the clearest of manners, many questions remained. And one scenario, which was not all that far-fetched, did not fail to raise many eyebrows. If Carlsen was to win his game and catch up with the leaders, the following would happen: first Giri and MVL would have to play a rapid tiebreak match (two games, if necessary followed by an Armageddon game). Then the winner would face the World Champion and play for first place in London and, in Giri's case, for first place in the GCT. However, if MVL beat Giri, he would only play Carlsen for first place in London. And if the Frenchman beat the Norwegian, he would have to play him again in another rapid tiebreak to decide on the winner of the Grand Chess Tour! Confused? So were we.

But let's not run ahead and look at the key games of Round 9 first. Playing black against Anand, Giri opted for another Berlin Defence and drew pretty effortlessly. The encounter between Aronian and Vachier-Lagrave was more confusing. Everyone in the VIP room was convinced that Aronian had to win this game at all cost if he wanted to qualify for the 2016 GCT. Going by his quiet opening set-up, the only person who didn't seem to know this was Aronian himself. After the game had been drawn, Vachier-Lagrave also expressed his surprise at his opponent's approach. But hours later everyone found out that, in fact, Aronian had read the rules of the GCT better than most and that he had rightly foreseen that a draw might lead to a scenario that would bring him qualification to the next Tour anyway.

After these two games had been drawn, all eyes were fixed on the game between Carlsen and Grischuk. Those who had been hoping for a thriller certainly got what they had come for.

SI 1.3 – B51
Magnus Carlsen
Alexander Grischuk
London 2015 (9)

1.♘f3 c5 2.e4 d6 3.♗b5+ ♘d7 4.0-0 a6 5.♗d3 ♘gf6 6.♖e1 b5 7.c4 g5



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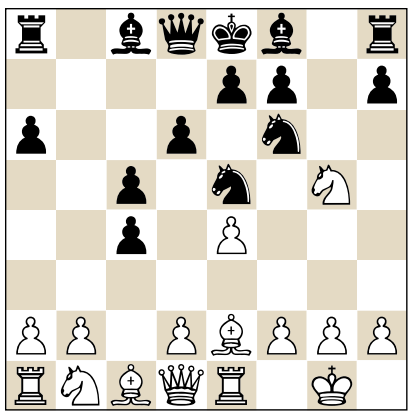
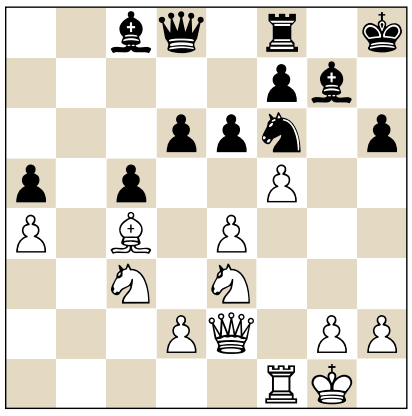
The pawn push that Veselin Topalov had used successfully against Carlsen in the first round of the 2015 Sinquefield Cup (see New In Chess 2015/7 for his notes to that win).

8.♘xg5 ♘e5 9.♗e2 bxc4

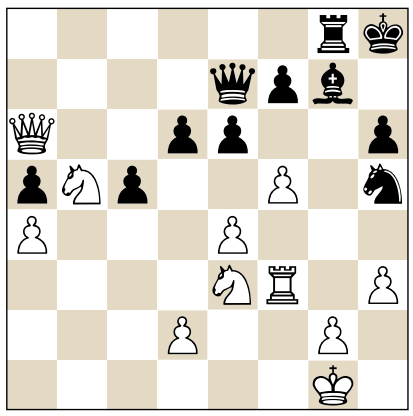


10.♘c3!? Carlsen deviates. In Saint Louis he had been in a sacrificial mood and proceeded with 10.♘a3 ♖g8 11.♘xc4 ♘xc4 12.d4. **10...♖b8** Played after a very long think. **11.♖f1 h6 12.♘f3 ♘d3 13.♘e1 ♘xb2 14.♗xb2 ♖xb2 15.♗xc4 ♖b4 16.♕e2 ♗g7 17.♘c2 ♖b6 18.♖ab1 0-0 19.♖xb6 ♕xb6 20.♘e3 e6 21.f4 ♔h8 22.f5 a5 23.a4 ♕d8**

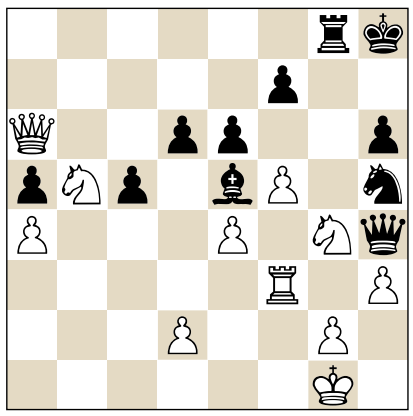


The opening manoeuvres have yielded White a considerable edge. The computer recommends 24.♗a6 now and assesses the position as approximately +0.7. **24.h3 ♕e7 25.♗a6 ♗xa6 26.♕xa6 ♘h5 27.♖f3?! ♖g8 28.♘b5?!**

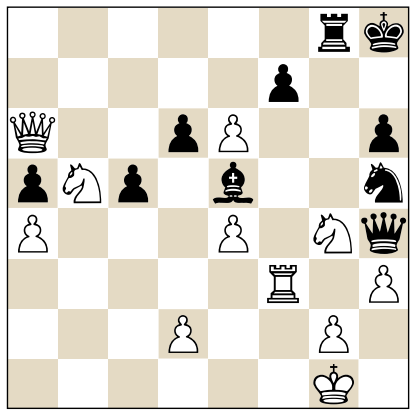
This knight jump asks Black some concrete questions, but the knight also dangerously strays away from the white kingside. As it turns out, Black can combine defence and attack.



28...♗e5 29.♘g4 ♕h4



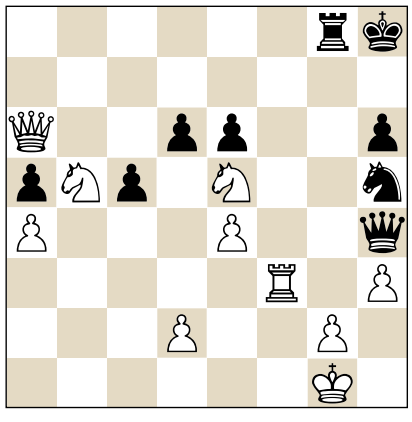
By now the VIP room was abuzz with excitement. And as if he had rightly felt that his presence would be highly appreciated, guest of honour Garry Kasparov had just arrived for his annual visit at the end of the Classic. Variations were flying through the air, as everyone anxiously watched the former World Champion to see his verdict. **30.fxe6?**



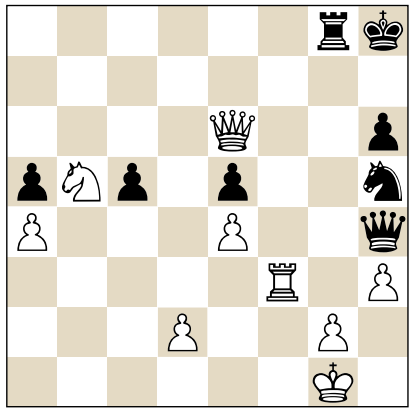
And this might have ended Carlsen's hopes of winning the Classic and the GCT. Better was 30.♘xe5, but then Black could have forced a draw immediately with 30...♕e1+ and now White has to go 31.♖f1! (as 31.♔h2?? loses to 31...dxe5 32.♘d6 ♘g3 33.♘xf7+ ♔h7, and Black's mating threats end the game), when 31...♖xg2+ 32.♔xg2 ♕g3+ leads to a perpetual. **30...fxe6** Played relatively quickly by Grischuk, while the expert

Playing for three results. In a spectacular last-round fight Alexander Grischuk first missed a win, then missed a forced draw and finally lost to Magnus Carlsen.

kibitzers in the VIP room, with the aid of an engine, had found an amazing win for Black: 30...♖xg4! 31.hxg4 ♕h2+ 32.♔f2 ♘f4!. That's the point. Due to the immediate mating threats, White has to defend: 33.♖g3 ♘xe6 34.♖f3 ♘f4 35.♖g3 ♘g6 36.♖f3 ♔g7!. Now Black has time to consolidate, and after e.g. 37.♕b7 he brings back the knight with decisive effect: 37...♘f4! 38.♖g3 ♕h4!, and Black wins. **31.♘xe5**



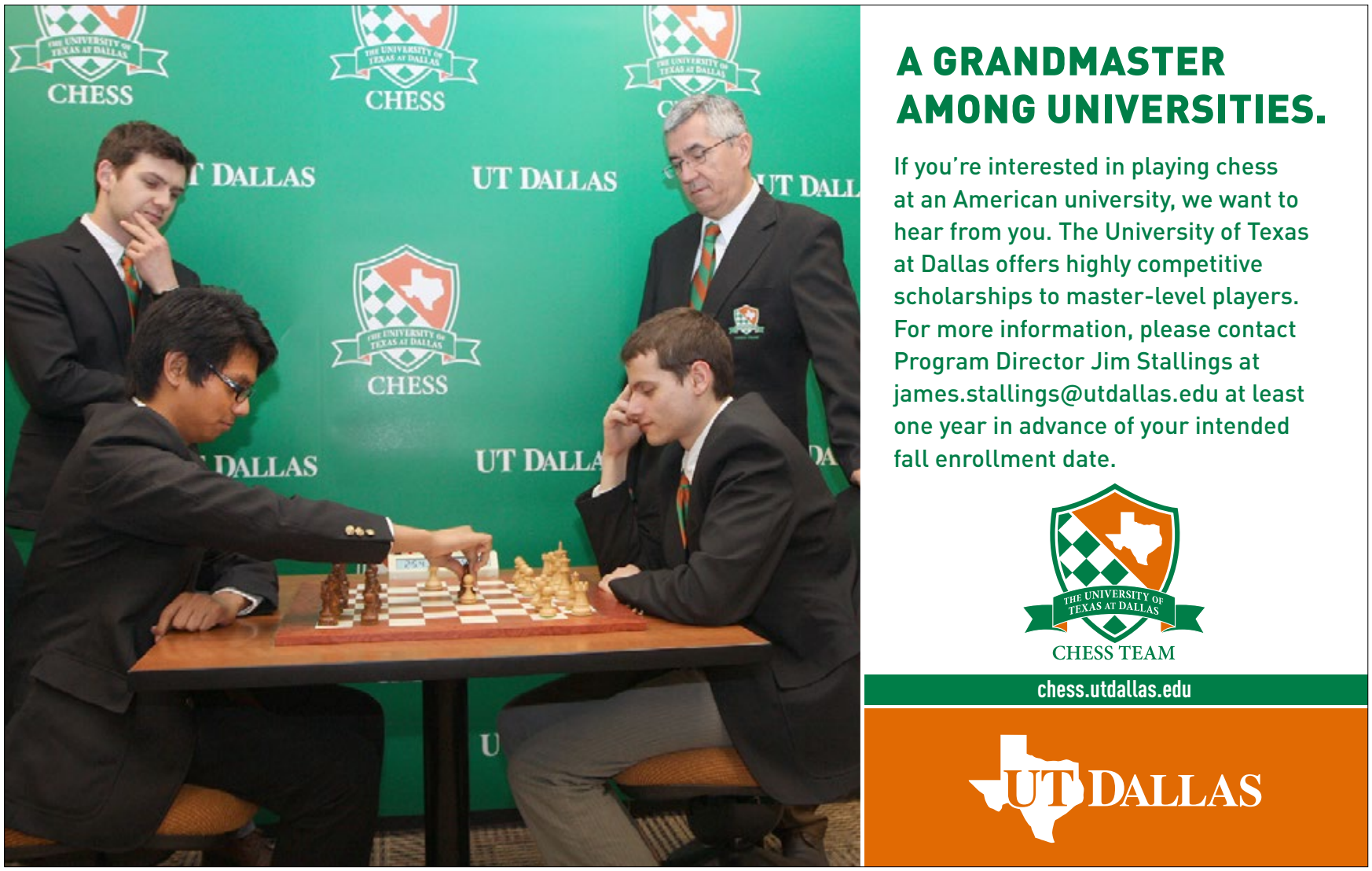
31...dxe5 And now Grischuk misses a direct chance to draw. With 31...♕e1+ he could have forced a draw, as White will have to play 32.♖f1, which again allows 32...♖xg2+ and a perpetual. Both players had missed that after 32.♔h2 ♘f4 33.♘g4, it looks as if White is winning, but Black has 33...♘e2, followed by mate on g1!. **32.♕xe6**



32...♕e1+?? Now Grischuk thought he was going for the perpetual, but it's no longer there. His only chance was 32...♕g5, and as 33.g4 ♘f4 34.♕f5 ♕e7 is OK for Black, as he threatens ...♖f8, White should go 33.♖f2, and the endgame after 33...♘f4 34.♕g4 ♕xg4 35.hxg4 will no doubt end in a draw. **33.♔h2 ♖xg2+ 34.♔xg2 ♕xd2+ 35.♔g1 ♕e1+ 36.♖f1 ♕e3+ 37.♖f2 ♕e1+ 38.♔g2** And the drama had come to an end. Black resigned.

Which meant a three-way tie for first in the Classic and, as a consequence, tiebreaks. As the Olympia Congress Centre was not available on Monday, the London Chess Classic didn't have an extra day for possible tiebreaks, as had been the case in Stavanger and St. Louis.

By now the players knew what to expect next, and it came as quite a shock to Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, who now blamed himself for not having studied the tiebreak rules before the last round. Incredulously listening, he was informed that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Carlsen would get a bye and that he and Giri would have to play a rapid match first. However, if he won that match and then lost to Carlsen, Giri would end in second place anyway!

And then there was this other thing, which in fact he didn't complain about: if he beat both Giri and Carlsen, he'd have to play Carlsen again to determine the winner of the Grand Chess Tour. Surely, that tiebreaker would only start somewhere around midnight.

This didn't happen. The last round of the Classic ended around 11 p.m. after long hours of extra-time chess. While Carlsen could go out and recover from the rollercoaster against Grischuk, Giri and MVL returned to the stage to play the first tiebreak match of the evening. The first game seemed to be a plea not to judge the Berlin too harshly. Playing as Black, Giri got an excellent position and exploited his chances with precision and a steady hand. As he was playing with the white pieces in the second game and only needed a draw, it looked as if little could go wrong for the Dutch number one, but it still did. From a seemingly innocent position he created some slight problems for himself that MVL exploited masterfully. The sudden turn of events had an unsettling effect on Giri. In the Armageddon game, MVL, who only needed a draw as Black, was barely challenged and soon took the initiative and the game.

After Giri had spoiled his chances to play for tournament victory and first place in the GCT, it was MVL's turn to receive a mental blow. As it turned out, there was never any chance that he'd play a second tiebreaker against the World Champion in London. The first tiebreaker was essentially decided in the first game, when MVL had no problems in the opening and middlegame, but went under in a rook and pawn ending that he would probably have drawn on a better day. In the second game he stood no chance and Carlsen could decide the issue by offering a draw in a superior position.

NEW IN CHESS

Bad news. Tournament director Malcolm Pein informs Maxime Vachier-Lagrave that if he beats Giri in the tiebreak and then loses to Carlsen, he will only finish third. The Frenchman is not amused.

Which left many of the spectators with mixed feelings. While once again Magnus Carlsen had made a deep impression with his inexorable fighting spirit and his relentless will to win, it was hard not to feel sorry for Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. The Frenchman started the day with reasonable chances to win the London Classic, but by midnight he realized that he had not even qualified for the next GCT series, as only the first three in the overall standings do so automatically. And there Levon Aronian had calculated and gambled well.

For Magnus Carlsen all ended well. For the fourth time he won the London Chess Classic, and this victory also made him the winner of the 2015 Grand Chess Tour and a $75,000 bonus.

What's next?

What the 2016 Grand Chess Tour will look like is not entirely clear as this issue goes to press. In early January, Altibox Norway Chess issued a press release saying that they are leaving the GCT. The Norwegians prefer to go their own way, as they believe that commercial sponsorship should be the backbone of their event and that the GCT should not rely mainly on private sponsorship. In a response Malcolm Pein said that St. Louis and London will continue the GCT and that they would shortly announce a third tournament to join them.

The following nine players have qualified for the 2016 Grand Chess Tour: to begin with, the top-three finishers in the 2015 Tour, Magnus Carlsen, Anish Giri and Levon Aronian. The remaining six players were determined by their average FIDE rating in 2015 and these are: Vladimir Kramnik, Hikaru Nakamura, Fabiano Caruana, Vishy Anand, Veselin Topalov and Wesley So. As for Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, we've been told that the GCT organizers are slightly embarrassed by the fate that befell the French GM and are looking for a way to compensate him in the 2016 Tour.

The field for Altibox Norway Chess, which is scheduled for April 16-29, has not yet been announced. However, it's not a big secret that Magnus Carlsen will top the line-up.

NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

SL 1.6 – D11
Magnus Carlsen
Hikaru Nakamura
London 2015 (7)

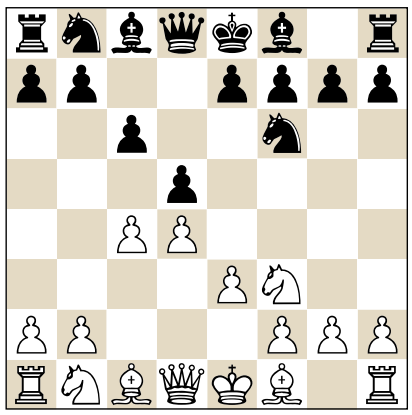
Three rounds to go in the last leg of the Grand Chess Tour and not much positive to be said about the World Champion's experience in the GCT as of yet. But if, despite an overall minus score, you still have a chance in the overall standings, it is hard not to be motivated, especially when facing the leading Nakamura.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6!?

An interesting surprise by Nakamura, who recently, at least result-wise, has done quite well against Magnus with 2...e6. But having suffered in the opening in St. Louis, and trying to be the first to come up with a surprise in this crucial game, Hikaru goes back to the Slav.

3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3

Magnus's preferred line, giving Naka his chance to spring a second surprise:



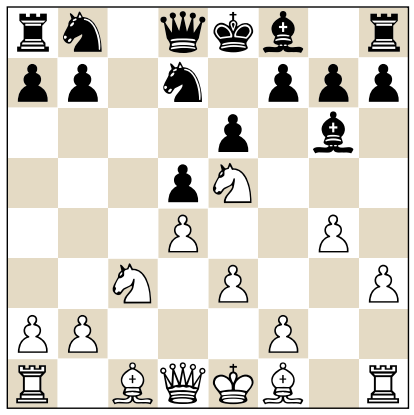
4...♗g4!?

Against Magnus, Naka has only played 4...a6.

5.h3 ♗h5 6.cxd5!?

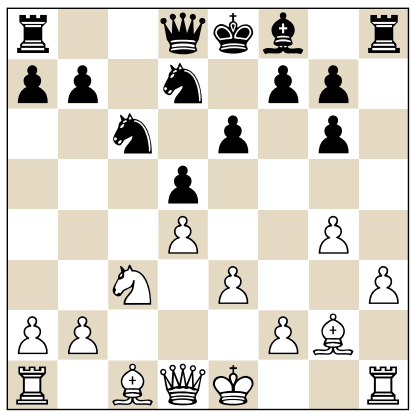
Played after prolonged thought. It is a rare continuation at top level these days, but it serves the purpose of not having to face Nakamura's preparation in the main lines.

6...cxd5 7.♘c3 e6 8.g4 ♗g6 9.♘e5 ♘fd7!



The exchange of the c-pawns has made the c6-square available for the b8-knight, giving Black a very harmonious position.

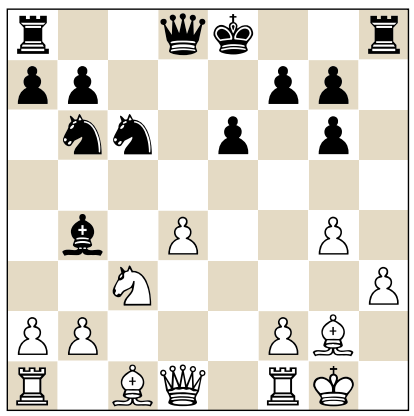
10.♘xg6 hxg6 11.♗g2 ♘c6



12.e4!?

An interesting way to change the structure, as Black was completely fine after 12.0-0 f5 in Tregubov-Anand, Corsica 2014. Maybe 11...f5!? is Black's most exact move order, but as Black is fine in the game, this is of minor importance.

12...dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♗b4+ 14.♘c3 ♘b6 15.0-0

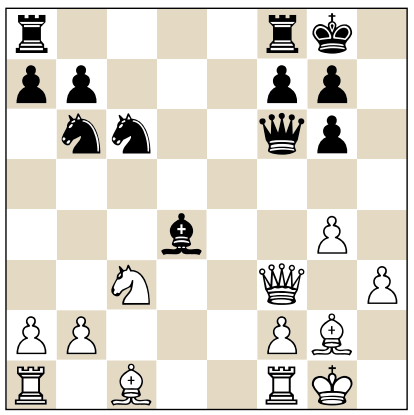


15...0-0

Here 15...♘xd4 was interesting, as 16.♗xb7 ♖xh3 would give Black an overwhelming attack if White were to take the exchange. However, by playing less materialistically with 17.♗g2 ♖h8 18.♗f4 White keeps decent compensation for the sacrificed pawn. But Nakamura seems reluctant to play in his normal aggressive style in this game, as a draw would preserve his tournament lead and effectively eliminate Magnus from the fight for first place overall.

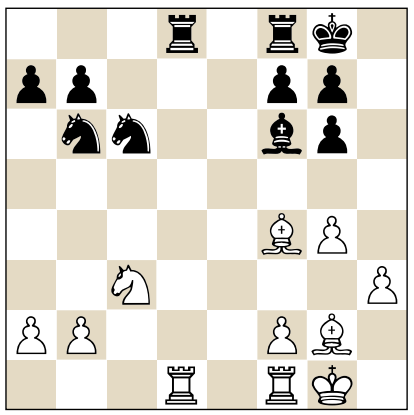
16.d5 exd5 17.♘xd5 ♗c5 18.♘c3 ♗d4 19.♕f3 ♕f6?!

Again, sticking to his drawing strategy.



20.♕xf6 ♗xf6 21.♗f4 ♖ad8 22.♖ad1

After a not-too-impressive opening, White has gained some advantage with basically a free bishop pair. Even so, in a symmetrical structure without queens Black's position, although unpleasant, should be drawable. But now Nakamura started relying on his instincts, unbalancing the position instead of going for the more obvious rook swaps on the d-file.

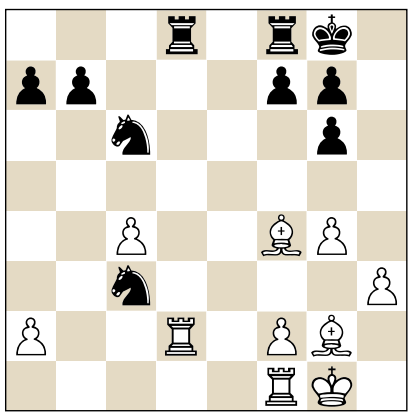


NEW IN CHESS

Hikaru Nakamura seemed to be steering for a comfortable draw, but once again he had to bow to Magnus Carlsen, who increased his score against the American to +12, =18, –0.

22...♗xc3 23.bxc3 ♘a4 24.c4 ♘c3 25.♖d2!

A small but important move. In this manner White keeps opposing on the d-file, while simultaneously covering the e2-square.

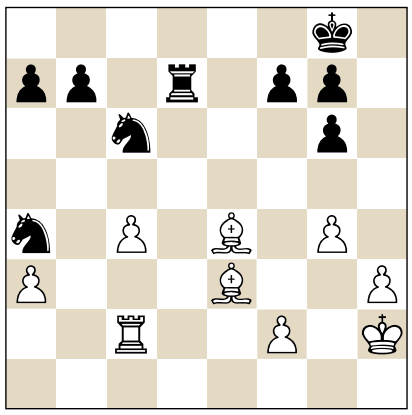


25...♖xd2 26.♗xd2 ♘e2+

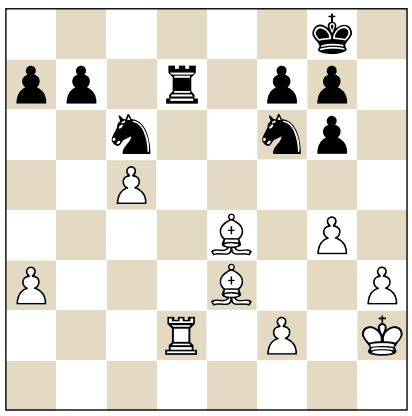
As the bishop has left f4, this check is no longer dangerous, but 26...♘xa2 27.♗xc6! bxc6 28.♖a1 would just trap the knight, so Black has no choice.

27.♔h2 ♖d8 28.♗e3 ♘c3 29.a3 ♖d3 30.♖c1 ♘d1 31.♗e4 ♖d7 32.♗c5 ♘b2 33.♖c2 ♘a4 34.♗e3

The position has stabilized. White keeps his bishop pair and Black has been forced to withdraw his knight.



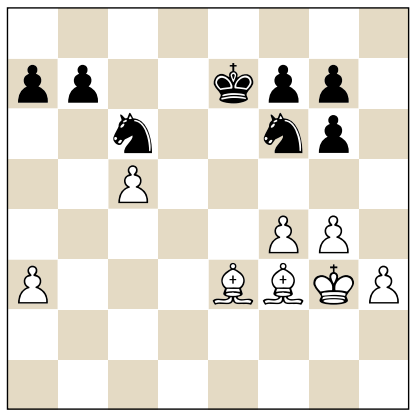
34...♘b6 35.c5!? Somewhat restricting the dark-squared bishop. 35.♗xb6 axb6 36.♖b2 also looked promising, but it entailed the risk of a drawn rook ending coming up. Magnus wisely maintains the tension. **35...♘d5 36.♖d2 ♘f6**



37.♖xd7!?

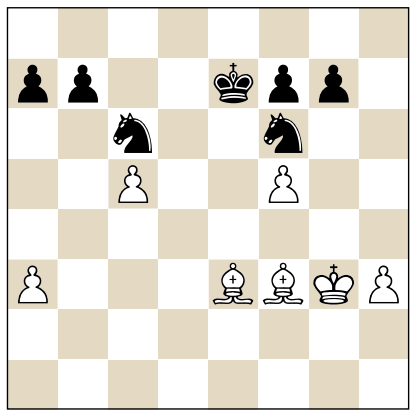
It would seem to me that there was some logic in keeping on the rooks in order to have more pieces to try and complicate matters, but Magnus believed that the black fortress was in no way impregnable.

37...♘xd7 38.♔g3 ♔f8 39.f4 ♘f6 40.♗f3 ♔e7



The time-control has been reached, without anything much having happened in the game so far. White does of course have the bishop pair, but Black's position is solid, without obvious weaknesses, while White's structure is somewhat shattered. In addition, the black knights have strongholds on c6 and f6. It's easy to understand why Nakamura felt reasonably confident he'd draw this position without too much trouble. For a start, it is hard to see how White can improve his position, and his next move looks as if it's worsening it!

41.f5! gxf5 42.gxf5

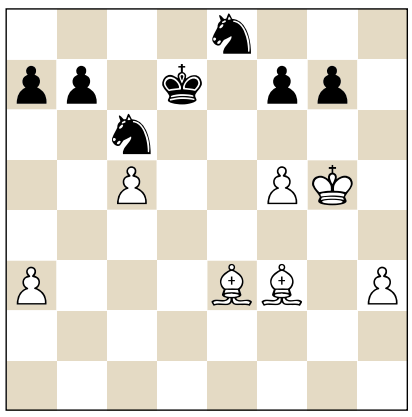


What has White achieved by this exchange? To begin with, all his pawns are now isolated and the f6 stronghold has become even more solid... Even so, there is considerable progress for White. His king can

proceed further up the board, combined with pushing the h-pawn, and one advantage of the bishops over the knights is that they can decide to get exchanged at any point. ♗xc6, followed by ♗g5, is not a threat right now, because after ... ♔f8, ♗xf6 gxf6 the pawn ending is drawn, as the black king will be in time for counterplay on the h-file while the white kings walks to a5.

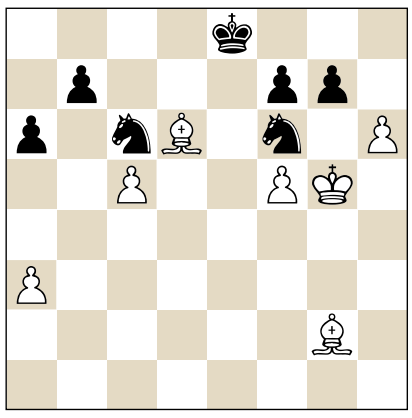
But Black has to remain alert.

42...♔d7 43.♔f4 ♘e8 44.♔g5!



As so often, the king becomes a powerful piece in the endgame. It is excellently placed on g5. After 44...♘f6 45.♗xc6+, followed by 46.♗d4, White comes close to forcing a winning pawn ending, but Black seems to draw by a tempo, which means that only 45.h4! is the right response, keeping the tension and further improving the white position. After the tempting 44... f6+, White just plays 45.♔h5!, when ♗xc6+, followed by ♔g6, becomes a decisive threat, so Black has no choice but to keep biding his time.

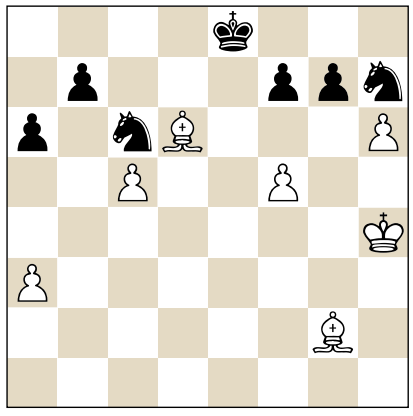
44...♔e7 45.♗f4 a6 46.h4 ♔f8 47.♗g3 ♘f6 48.♗d6+ ♔e8 49.♔f4 ♘d7 50.♗g2 ♔d8 51.♔g5 ♔e8 52.h5 ♘f6 53.h6!



> ‘It’s easy to understand why Nakamura felt reasonably confident he’d draw this position without too much trouble.’

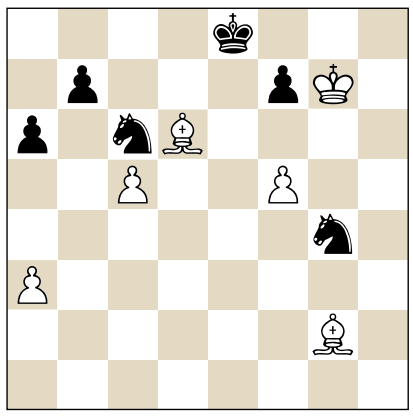
After patiently making slight improvements to his position, White now goes for the essential pawn swap on the kingside. It does reduce the material left on the board, but much more importantly it undermines the f6-square, while at the same time allowing the white king to break through even further.

53...♘h7+ 54.♔h5 ♘f6+ 55.♔g5 ♘h7+ 56.♔h4!



Stepping out of reach of the black knights and leaving Black no choice but to take and allow the white king in.

56...gxh6 57.♔h5 ♘f6+ 58.♔xh6 ♘g4+ 59.♔g7!

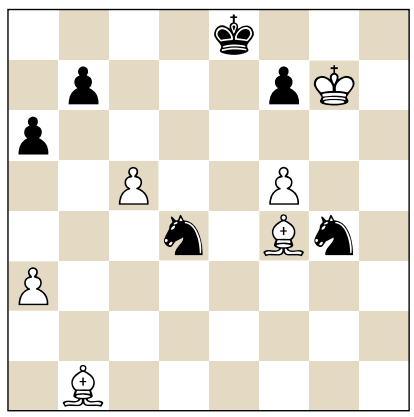


White has made huge progress, and has almost made it look like the position after move 40 was a forced win. But Black’s resistance has in no way been broken, as the downside of the white king having reached g7, is that the f5-pawn will be much harder to defend. Nakamura instantly tries to maximize his counterplay against it.

59...♘d4 60.♗e4 ♘f2 61.♗b1!

The chessboard is exactly big enough for the bishop to hide from the black knights while keeping f5 protected.

61...♘g4 62.♗f4

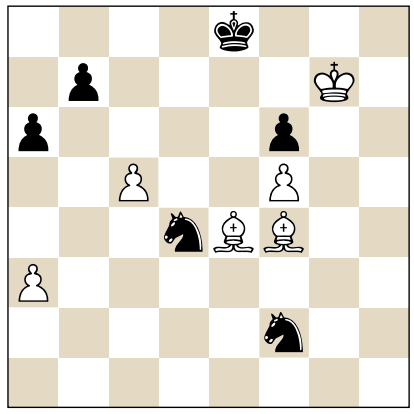


62...f6

Fixing the f-pawn and basing his counterplay on attacking it. Harassing the bishops will not really work, e.g. 62...♘e2 63.♗c7 ♘c3 64.♗c2 ♘e3 65.♗d3 illustrates that Black would just be making one-move threats with no purpose.

63.♗e4 ♘f2 64.♗b1 ♘g4 65.♗e4 ♘f2

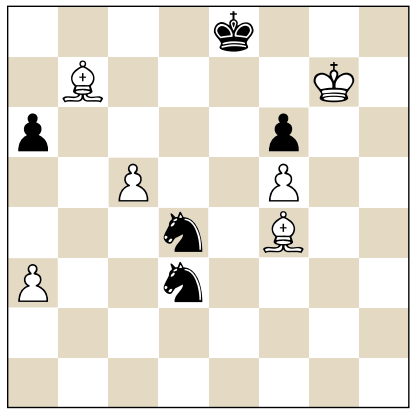
Black’s counterplay makes a lot of sense. In order to proceed, White has to give up the f-pawn, further reducing the material.



66.♗xb7 ♘d3

The first 40 moves were nothing spe-

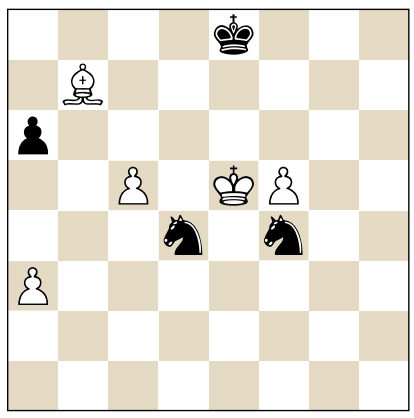
cial, but the next 25 constituted a very instructive endgame, in which White broke through a very solid-looking fortress. But unusually enough, the brilliance and tactical complications were saved for the last stage of the game, after six hours of play:



67.♔xf6!!

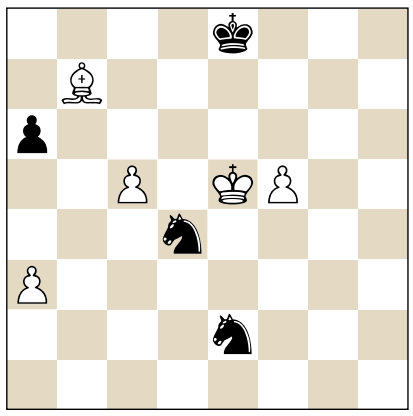
A stunning piece sacrifice, and the only way to win! It looks as if 67.♗d6? ♘xf5+ 68.♔f6 ♘xd6 69.♗c6+! ♔d8 70.cxd6 would lead to an easily winning ending for White, but surprisingly this position is a draw! White simply has no way to get his king to the queenside without allowing the knight to harass the white pawns: 70...♘b2 71.♔e6 ♘c4 72.a4 a5 73.♔d5 ♘e3 74.♔c5 ♘g4. This is the principal line. After 75.♔b6 ♘e5 76.♗b5 ♘f7 Black is just in time, as 77.d7 ♘e5 78.♔xa5 ♘xd7 is a draw, since Black's king will reach the crucial c8-square in the pawn ending.

67...♘xf4 68.♔e5!



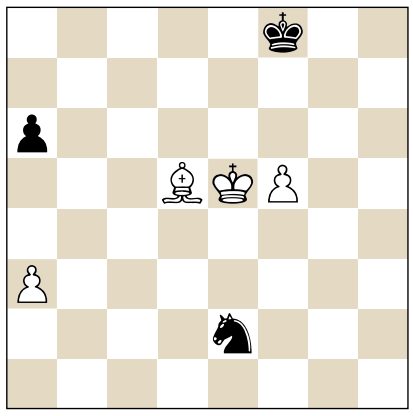
This is the point. The king attacks both knights, who are forced to defend each other to no further purpose. After 68...♘de2 69.♗xa6 the knights are completely stuck, and 68...♘xf5 69.♔xf5 ♘d3 70.c6 ♔d8 71.♗xa6 leaves White two pawns up, with no fortress in sight. So Nakamura goes for his best chance.

68...♘fe2



69.f6?

A mistake that could have ruined an otherwise great game and a tournament comeback. With 69.c6!, White could have crowned his efforts, as Black has no other choice but to give up a knight straightaway, since 69...♔d8 70.f6! would allow a white pawn to queen. But after 69...♘xc6+ 70.♗xc6+ ♔f8 71.♗d5!



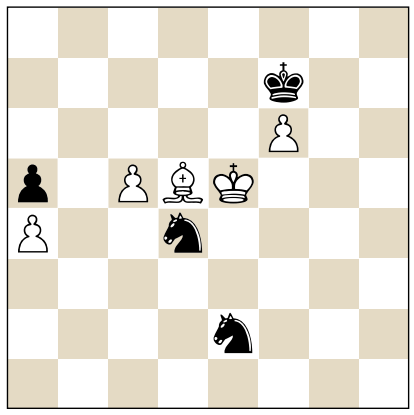
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

there is a huge difference compared to the game, in that the white pawns are still on a3 and f5. The difference is clearly seen after 71...♘c3 72.♗c4 a5, when White doesn't have to defend the a4-pawn, and can simply play 73.♔d4 ♘d1 74.a4 ♔e7 (74...♘b2 would have been relevant with the white pawn on f6, but here, after 75.♗b3 ♔e7 76.♔c3 ♘xa4 77.♗xa4 ♔f6, the bishop can defend the pawn, because it's still on a light square) 75.♗b3 ♘f2 76.♔c5 ♔f6 77.♗e6, and again it helps that the pawn is still on f5. White wins by collecting a5 and then queening his a-pawn, while his pawn and bishop are securely defending each other.

69...a5 70.a4

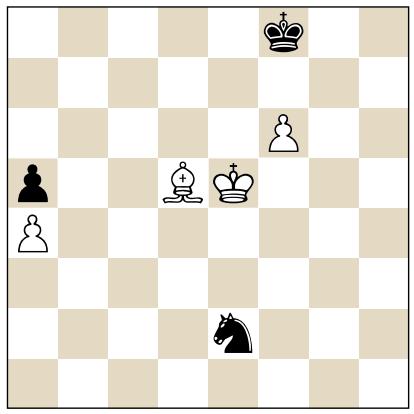
This looks winning, as it puts Black in a kind of zugzwang. It also seems to be the most logical continuation, since 70.c6 ♘b5 will lead nowhere.

70...♔f7 71.♗d5+



71...♔f8??

At first sight a solid and obvious move, keeping control of the promotion square, but it takes the pressure off the f6-pawn, which proves fatal. Black could have escaped with 71...♔g6!, as after 72.c6 ♘xc6 73.♗xc6 ♔f7 74.♗d5+ ♔f8 it makes a decisive difference that the white pawns are now on a4 and f6, and therefore far easier to attack.

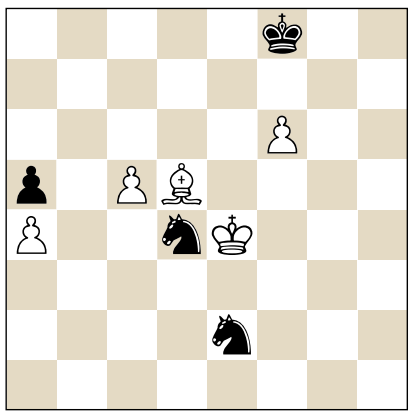


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

After 75.♗c4 ♘c3 76.♗b3 Black just bides his time with 76...♔e8, and 77.♔d4 ♘e2 will draw almost by magic. The crucial point is 78.♔c4 ♘c1!, attacking the bishop, and then having ...♔f7 next, winning the f6-pawn. And also 78.♔c5 ♘c3!, threatening to take on a4. And after

the bishop has taken back, ...♔f7 clears off the last pawn. It still feels very counter-intuitive to me that both this endgame and the one analysed above are drawn for Black, but the computer shows that there is no way White can exploit his seemingly overwhelming superiority. Even so, the drama was not over yet, as in the commentary room the computers indicated that White had only one way to exploit this favour, and Magnus took almost all of his remaining two minutes on the clock, before calmly withdrawing his king.

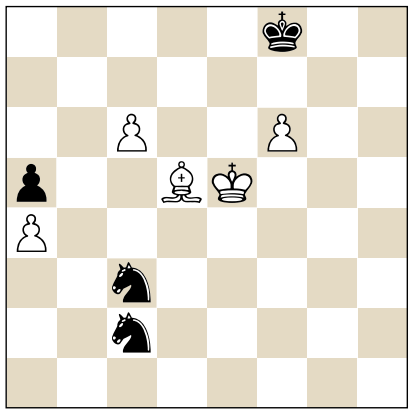
72.♔e4!



The point is that if the king reaches e3, the knights are doomed, as the king attacks both of them, and ♗c4 next will pick up one of them for free. So Nakamura tried:

72...♘c2 73.c6 ♘c3+ 74.♔e5!

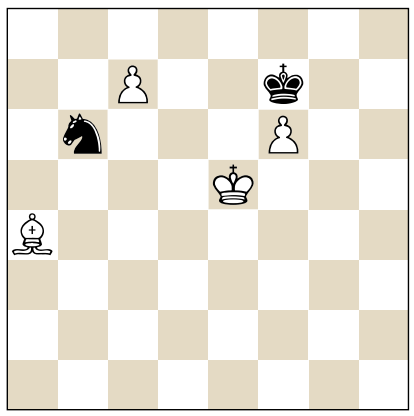
The king has done its job, and now returns to its more natural place, helping the passed pawns. The threat is c7 and queening. So Black is forced to take on a4, but it's not enough.



74...♘xa4 75.♗b3

A simple fork, picking up one of the knights, while keeping the two passed pawns and leaving Black in a hopeless position.

75...♘b6 76.♗xc2 a4 77.c7 ♔f7 78.♗xa4



And seeing that 78...♘c4+ 79.♔d5 ♘b6+ 80.♔c5! is hopeless, as both 80...♘xa4+ 81.♔c6! and 80...♘c8 81.♗d7 ♘a7 82.♔b6 soon will lead to a new queen, Nakamura resigned. A lot was still to come before Magnus pulled off a spectacular last-minute comeback to take both the tournament and the Tour, but without this win he would not even have had the chance to do so.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

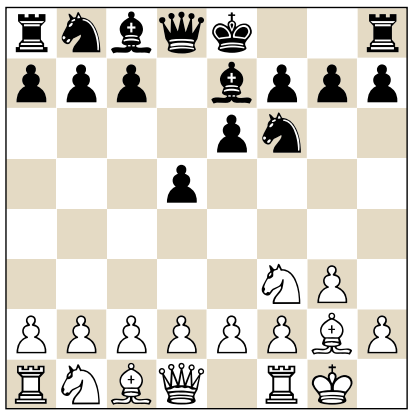
RE 24.12 – C00
Anish Giri
Hikaru Nakamura
London 2015 (8)

While the London Chess Classic started off slowly and the +1 score that I had from the first round [after beating Topalov – ed.] had been enough to stay in the lead, Round 7 brought me some bad news. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave pulled ahead with a second win (against Anand) and Magnus Carlsen caught up with me by beating Hikaru Nakamura. This meant that in the penultimate round, if I were to fight for something real, I would have to put some pressure on Hikaru. The fact that he had lost a very painful game to Magnus the day before wasn't helping him either.

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3

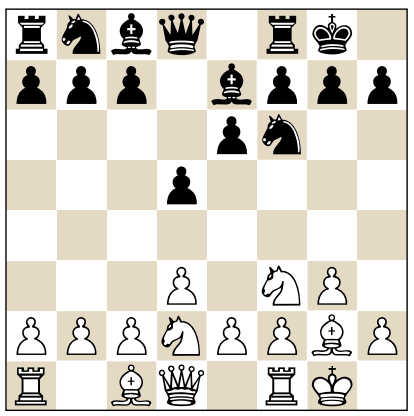
More often than not I try to play in a more principled way in the opening, but this day was one of those rare exceptions. In the long run, my timid opening play paid off, but objectively speaking my handling of the Réti didn't even yield me full equality.

2...♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.0-0 ♗e7



It's very popular nowadays amongst the top players to try at all cost to transpose to the ...♗e7 system against the Catalan. It is very passive for Black, but since practically all the top players go for it, there is obviously nothing wrong with this system, and White struggles to prove some advantage. I have pleasant memories of that line (which we would get after 5.c4 0-0 6.d4), but for this game I decided to go for something fresher.

5.d3 0-0 6.♘bd2



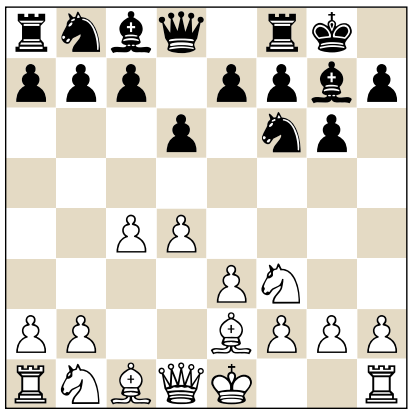
6...c5

6...♘c6 is how Levon Aronian handles this variation. The move looks disharmonious at first, but once Black pushes his e-pawn one step further, his position will start look-

ing very nice. Yet, having a Pirc with two tempi extra can't be all that bad.

7.e4 ♘c6 8.♖e1 ♕c7!?

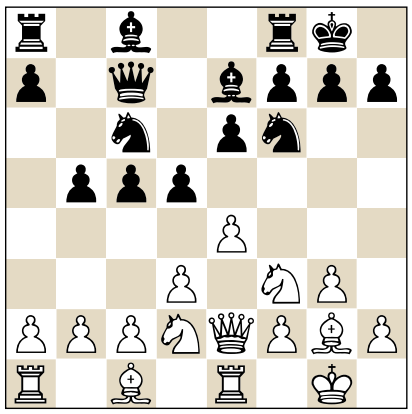
The latest fashion. More classical is to go for ...b5. In fact, both Hikaru and I have used this system with reversed colours. The same position a tempo down for White can arise from 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.e3!? 0-0 5.♗e2 d6.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

There, too, White chooses between the immediate 6.b4 or postponing it with 6.♕c2!?. For this game I decided to try out the rare plan of not closing the position and going for an attack, but of playing for development.

9.♕e2 b5



10.a4!?

10.e5 ♘d7 is arguably a better version than 8...b5 9.e5, since White didn't get time to go ♘f1 and ♗f4 and had to spend a useless tempo on ♕e2. The question is, of course, whether the queen on c7 is any good. In general, this closed position is very hard to play and assess, since White's attack might very well succeed. You just never know.

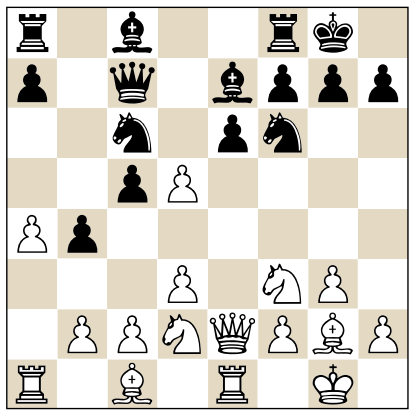
I was 'inspired' by a game by Peter Svidler, who went 10.exd5 first, but after 10...exd5 11.a4 bxa4!? 12.♖xa4 ♖e8 the best move was 13.♕d1, which was also what he played. Well, I am much too proud for that, so I decided that inversing the move order was probably a better idea.

10...b4

Taking on a4 is less attractive here.

11.exd5!?

A new move in this very rare position, but a common idea in this kind of set-up.



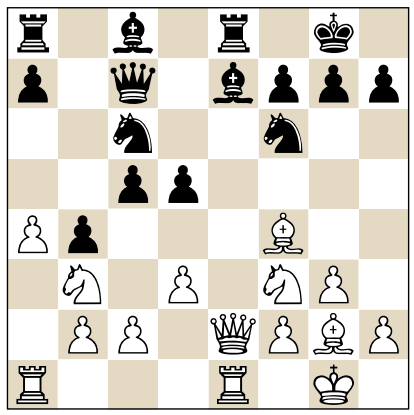
11...exd5

Taking with the knight is not very pretty, as White would have an excellent outpost for his knight on c4.

12.♘b3

My point was that now I would at least get the nice developing move ♗f4 with tempo, since his queen is on c7. However, this doesn't promise White any advantage; in fact, it barely yields him equality.

12...♖e8 13.♗f4



13...♕b6

Hikaru spent way too much time on this obvious decision.

13...♕d8 is not too bad, but after 14.♘e5 I felt my position would be comfortable. Black has some space on the queenside and some presence in the centre, but the d5- and c5-pawns may soon become somewhat vulnerable, once the bishop gets to e5.

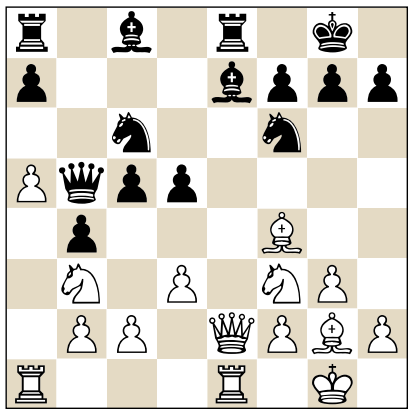
14.a5

NEW IN CHESS

Before the start of the round Anish Giri listens to a well-meant piece of advice from Veselin Topalov. Mickey Adams seems only mildly interested.

I could have played 14.♕d2 first, but I didn't want to allow 14...a5!?, when Black's queenside structure looks far too pretty.

14...♕b5

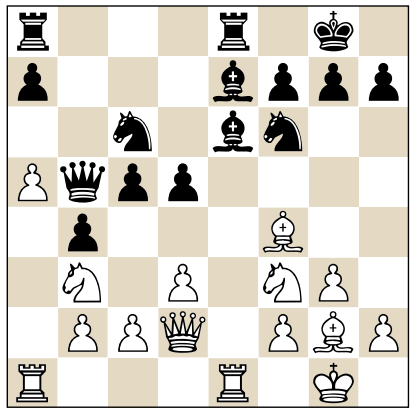


An excellent square for the queen.

15.♕d2

The queen moves out of the way. So far the play has been very natural and I hadn't spent much time, even though I hadn't really looked at this stuff before.

15...♗e6



16.a6!?

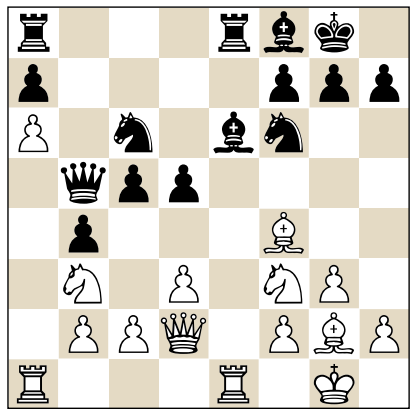
I rightly judged that my original intention of 16.♘e5 would lead to a very unpromising position, so I decided to interpolate this double-edged move. This pawn will, in fact, yield me victory in the end, but objectively speaking it might be pretty vulnerable.

16.♘e5 was premature: 16...♘xe5 17.♖xe5 ♘d7 18.♖e2 (I looked at 18.♖xd5, but it doesn't work: 18...♗xd5 19.♗xd5 ♖ad8 20.♗c7 ♖c8) 18...♗f6!, and Black is more than comfortable.

16.♘g5 is an empty shot as well after 16...♗d7.

But 16.♖e2!? was a decent alternative and possibly the best move.

16...♗f8



I felt this wasn't the best, since now, after ♘e5, the bishop no longer has a chance to reach the f6-square. But after a while I realized that this was a good move as well.

I looked at the very cooperative variation 16...♗c8? 17.♗g5 ♗xa6? 18.♘h4, which convinced me that my move

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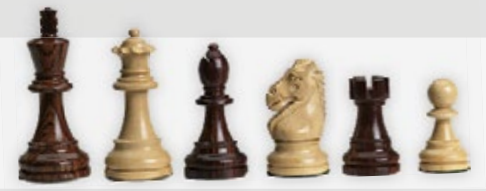
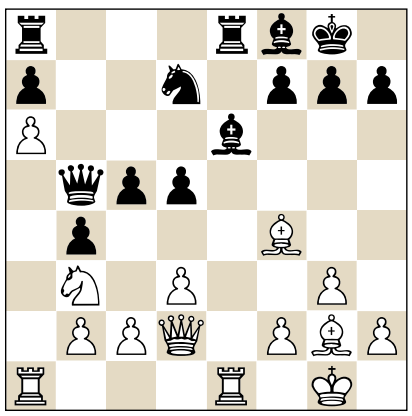
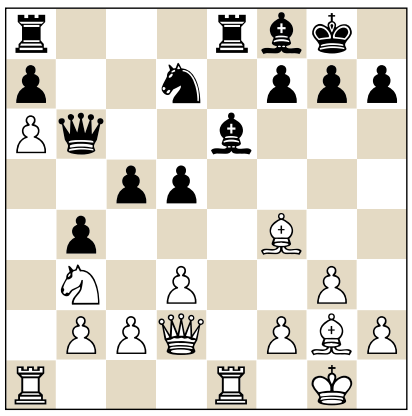


16.a6 couldn't be that bad. Black is close to lost here. The a6-pawn is, of course, a target but in order to ever attack it Black has to play much more subtly than this.
A move like 16...♖ad8!? would have been a decent alternative.
17.♘e5
Now this move makes some sense.
17...♘xe5 18.♗xe5 ♘d7 19.♗f4



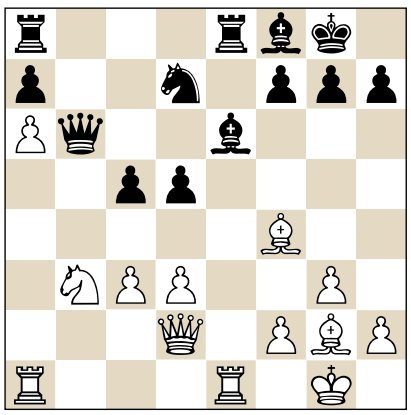
I felt the position should be about level here. One idea might be to go ♕d1, followed by c3 or even ♘d2, bringing the knight to the kingside. Hikaru played his next move rather quickly.
19...♕b6?! This move surprised me, as I didn't quite get the point. When trying to get into Hikaru's head, I thought that maybe he wanted to anticipate c4 ideas, and that's when I realized that c4 was actually a very strong move here.



20.c3?! Obviously, 20.c4! was the way to do it. I saw absolutely no difference between that move and the text and somehow decided to avoid considering the option of some ridiculous exchange sac here: 20...dxc4?! 21.♗xa8 c3!? 22.bxc3 ♖xa8 23.c4

'A very unusual decision for me: keeping the tension under unfavourable circumstances. But I strongly felt that Hikaru was having an off-day.'

♕c6. This is, of course, quite absurd, and I was very well aware of it, but somehow I completely forgot that 20.c3 constitutes no threat.
20...♖ac8!
Right after I had played 20.c3, I noticed that I wasn't threatening anything. This was a very painful revelation. For a moment I wanted to calculate some forcing simplifications after 21.cxb4, which should lead to an equal endgame, but in the end I decided to keep the tension and start the game all over again.
After 20.c4, 20...bxc3 21.bxc3



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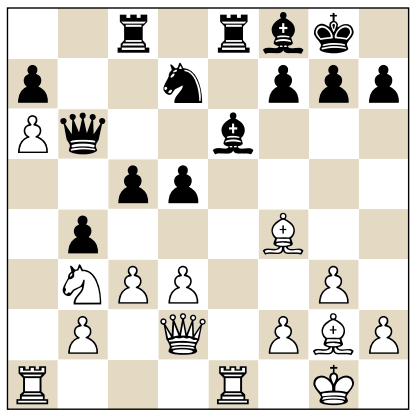
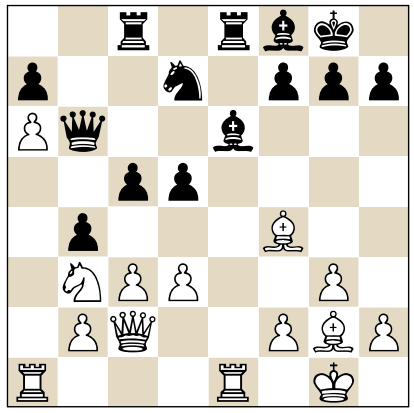
would have been forced, and now White finally gets a nice position, as the knight is taboo. Now 21...♗d6 seems to be the most logical to me (after 21...♕xb3??, 22.♖eb1 is the point), when White has the nice option of 22.♘a5!? ♗xf4 23.♕xf4 ♕xa6 24.♘c4 ♕c6 25.♘d6 ♖f8 26.c4! ♘b6 27.♘b5, with some pressure, although the feeling is that Black should be able to neutralize it in the long run.



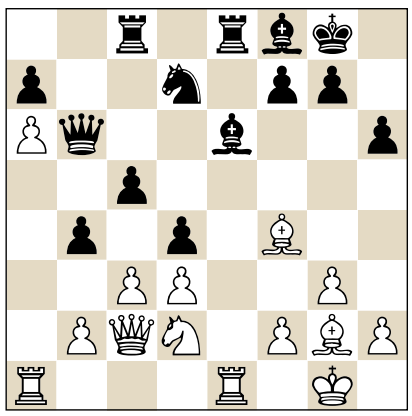
21.♕c2!? A very unusual decision for me: keeping the tension under unfavourable circumstances. But the whole game so far had been very unusual. I strongly felt that Hikaru was having an off-day, but so far I myself wasn't shining either.
After 21.cxb4 c4! 22.♗e3! would eventually peter out to a draw, for example 22...♕xb4 23.♕xb4 ♗xb4 24.dxc4 dxc4 25.♘d2 ♘c5, and Black's activity fully neutralizes White's far advanced a-pawn.



21...d4!? A rough decision and a decent one. After quite some thought I realized that closing the position with c4 wasn't favourable, even though my g2-bishop would get quite some long-range vision.
After 21...h6! I probably would have played 22.c4!? (22.h4 ♘f6 bothered me a little. Indeed Black is more than comfortable here), to at least ask Black some questions. My adviser here claims that Black is slightly more than fine after all three options, ...dxc4, ...d4 and ...♘f6, and I see no reasons not to agree here.
22.♘d2!
The best move in the position.
After 22.c4, 22...♗d6 was the sim-

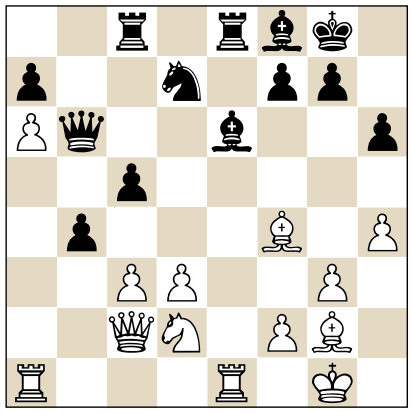
plest, I thought: 23.♕d2 ♗f5!, and here I realized that White is probably a little worse. It's highly unlikely that I will be able to use the a6-pawn as a trump and the d3-pawn is a worry.

22...h6 A good inclusion for Black.



23.h4 There wasn't anything better than this. I wasn't a big fan of my position, but I didn't think I had overstepped the limit.

23...dxc3 24.bxc3



24...bxc3? A remarkable mistake from an absolute world-class player. Hikaru releases the tension, underestimating his position and at the same time underestimating the danger that is awaiting him after the planned sequence.

24...b3 bothered me, when after 25.♕b2 c4 26.♘xc4 ♗xc4 27.dxc4 ♘c5 Black has nothing to worry about, but White should probably not complain too much either after 28.♗e3.

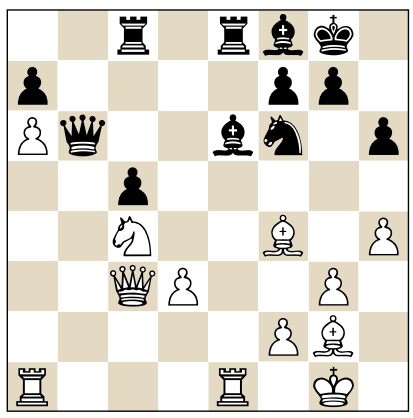
After 24...♘f6!? 25.♗b7 b3! was not so easy to spot somehow. Here I would probably consider going for 26.♖xe6! ♖xe6 27.♕xb3, with sufficient compensation for the exchange to keep the equilibrium.

Finally, 24...g5!? is a move that occurred to me only after Hikaru had taken on c3 twice, but there aren't many players in this world who would take this move seriously.

25.♕xc3 ♘f6

For a while I felt that it was unfair that I wasn't even slightly better after Black released the tension so easily and opened so many files for my pieces. After some mental complaining I finally found an idea I was very proud of.

26.♘c4



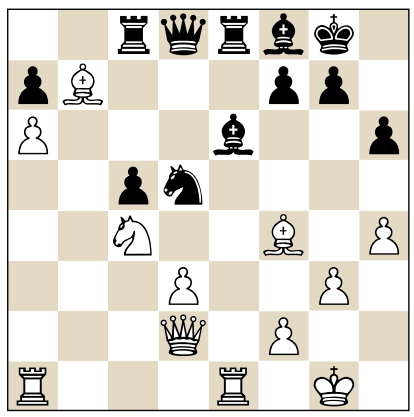
Here I blinked, noticing the option of ...♕b4!, but fortunately Hikaru followed his original plan.

26...♕d8?!

After 26...♕b4! the queen is very exposed, but Black gains an important tempo: 27.♕c2 (after 27.♕c1, 27...♗d5! is the point) 27...♗xc4! is not much for White. Now 28.♖eb1! is the best shot, when Black still has to defend, for example: 28...♗xd3 29.♕xd3 ♕d4 30.♕xd4 cxd4 31.♖b7 ♗c5 32.♗f1, and White keeps nice pressure here, although Black should be able to defend with some solid moves.

27.♗b7! I don't normally like letting my fianchettoed bishops too far out of the house, as it makes the king feel a little lonely, but here it didn't take me too long to see that the absence of the bishop wouldn't really be noticed in the kingdom.

27...♘d5 28.♕d2



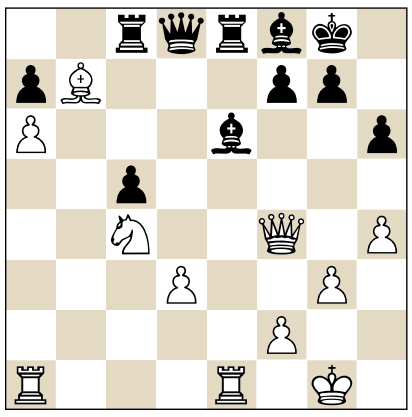
NEW IN CHESS

Jennifer Shahade interviews Anish Giri for the Grand Chess Tour website. The Dutch GM was the only participant not to lose a single game in the Tour. Thanks to his second spot in London, he also finished second in the overall standings.

28...♘xf4

28...♘b4!? is a tempting but not entirely correct exchange sacrifice. What's more, I spotted a very nice inclusion here: 29.♗d6! ♘c6 (29...♗xd6? 30.♗xc8! is the idea) 30.♗xc8 ♕xc8, and the following is some computer magic: 31.♕b2!! ♘d4 32.♕b7!.

29.♕xf4



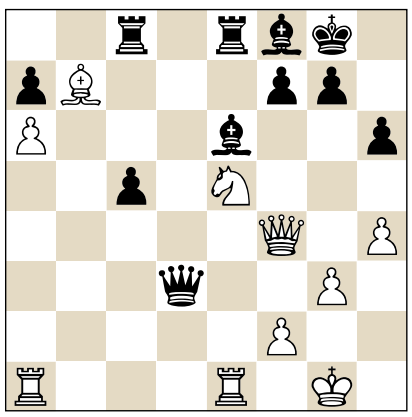
The position has cleared up. Black has no jumping pieces, and it becomes apparent that White has the advantage. I like it when such stuff happens. ☺

29...♕xd3!?

I also thought this was the best shot. Moving the rook would leave Black in a very passive position with the long-term danger of losing the a7-pawn after the eventual ♘a5-c6.

After 29...♖c7 30.♘a5 (30.♖ab1! is better) 30...♗d7 31.♗d5 looked pretty to me, but Black defends with 31...♖xe1+ 32.♖xe1 ♗b5!.

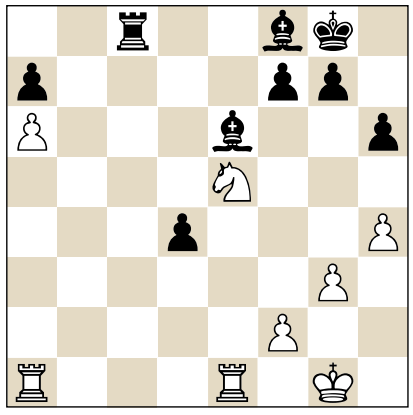
30.♘e5!



It's better not to take the rook just yet, of course. In fact, I never quite got to take it.

30...♕d6? Inventive, but Hikaru miscalculated something.

30...♕d4! was the most natural move and also the best chance: 31.♗xc8!? (31.♕xd4 cxd4 32.♘c6?! was my favourite, frankly, but in fact after 32...♖xc6! 33.♗xc6 ♖d8 the d-pawn is quite a nuisance and Black is not doing too badly) 31...♖xc8 (31...♕xf4 32.♗xe6! wins on the spot) 32.♕xd4 cxd4



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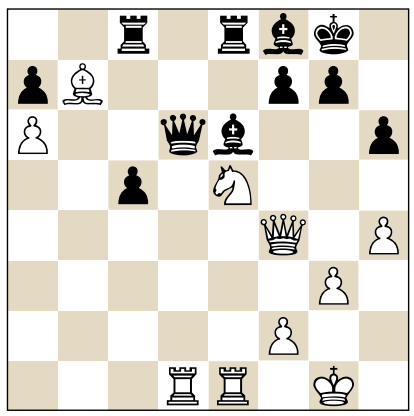
and here I was quite worried that I might eventually lose my a6-pawn

> 'I don't normally like letting my fianchettoed bishops too far out of the house, as it makes the king feel a little lonely.'

and I very likely would have to play some exchange-up position with 3 vs 3 on the kingside. It's hard to give a definitive verdict here, but it's clear who is having all the fun. Now 33.♖ec1 can lead to a fascinating series of forced moves, which I would actually be capable of finding, given the forced nature of the position: 33...♖d8 34.♘c6 ♖d7 35.♖d1! d3 (35...♗c5? 36.♖a5! ♗b6 37.♖b5!) 36.♘e5 ♖d5 37.♘xd3 ♗g4! 38.♖d2 ♗b4 39.♖b2 ♗c3 40.♖b8+ ♔h7 41.♘b2, when White is a full exchange up, but Black has a nice bishop pair and has good chances of eventually winning the a6-pawn and holding.

30...♕f5? is not the same, as now my idea of 31.♕xf5 ♗xf5 32.♘c6! works perfectly with the c-pawn being too backward to cause any real discomfort.

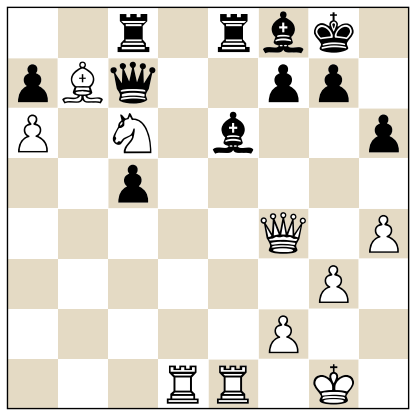
31.♖ad1



31...♕c7

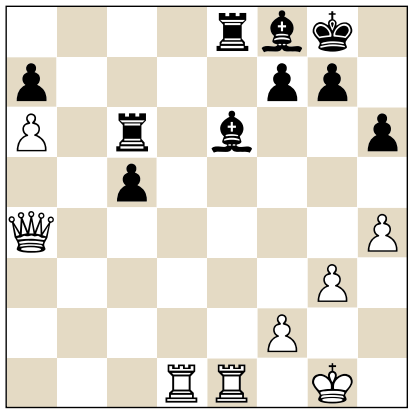
31...♕b6 looked like the best option to me, but that was because I had missed that after 32.♖b1 ♕c7 33.♘c6! ♗d6 I don't have to panic, but can just play 34.♕f3!, which leads to a completely winning position, since the a7-pawn is doomed.

32.♘c6!

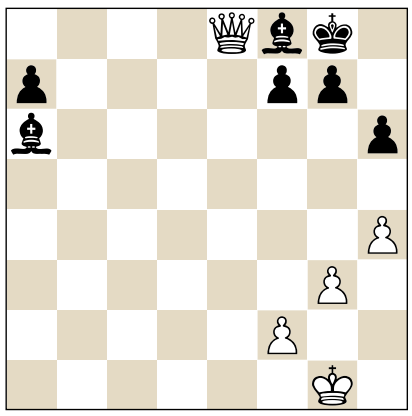


32...♕xc6!? A queen sacrifice is usually the toughest defence in a lost position, and this is probably no exception. However, two moves later Hikaru loses on the spot.

I have to confess I wasn't quite sure about 32...♕b6, but in fact the win is quite brutal: 33.♗xc8 ♖xc8 34.♖xe6! fxe6 35.♘e5. I had seen this idea, but it is surprising how effective it is.
33.♗xc6 ♖xc6 34.♕a4!
Important.



34...♖ec8? The final mistake.
The last possibility to keep on fighting was 34...♖cc8!. In fact, it's probably far from easy. My intention was 35.♖c1. Now I have stopped the direct push of the c-pawn, although even after 35...c4!? 36.♖xc4 ♗xc4 37.♖xe8 ♖xe8 38.♕xe8 ♗xa6



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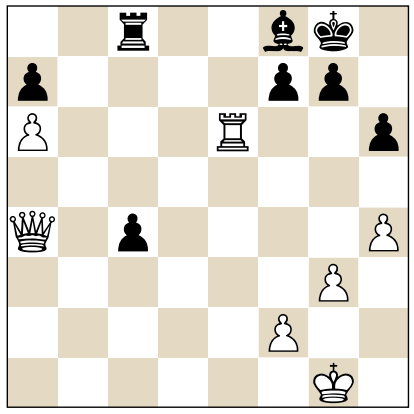
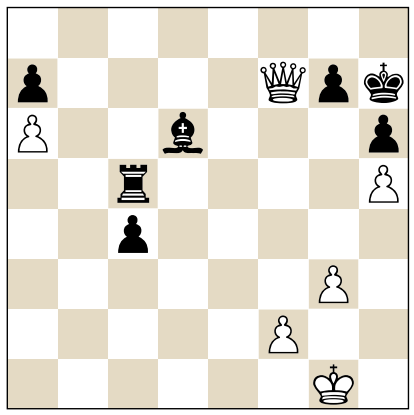
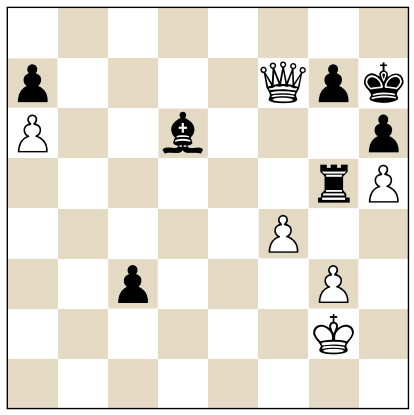
I wondered how easy it would be to win this position, recalling a famous story about Polugaevsky, who won this very endgame thanks to some brilliant adjournment work. Not sure I would have been able to reproduce it, but it's hard to believe this would hold: 39.g4!? would probably have been my pick, stopping ...h5/g6. Not sure how easy it is to crack this, but it must be doable.
35.♖d8!
Important 2.
35...c4 36.♖xc8 ♖xc8 37.♖xe6!



Important 3.
37...fxe6 38.♕d7 ♖c5 39.♕xe6+ ♔h7 40.♕f7 ♗d6 41.h5!



Important 4. As my favourite commentator says in such cases: 'It's lights out.'
41...♖g5
There is no way to save the bishop. 41...♗c7 looks like the only way, but after the beautiful yet typically study-like sequence 42.♕g6+ ♔h8 43.♕e8+ ♔h7 44.♕e4+ ♔g8 45.♕a8+! ♔h7 46.♕xa7 Black's position collapses.
42.♔g2 Everything wins here.
42...c3 43.f4

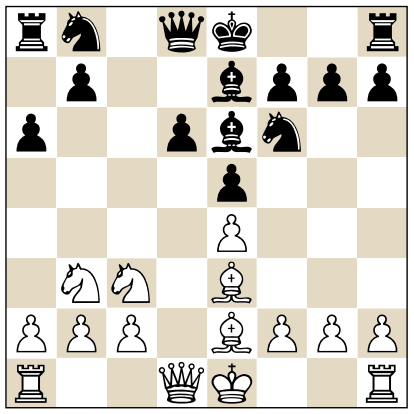


Black will lose the bishop and the c-pawn will not be in time. A cute finish would have been 43...c2 44.fxg5! c1♕ 45.g6+ ♔h8 46.♕e8+ ♗f8 47.♕xf8, with the hashtag #. A very important win for me.

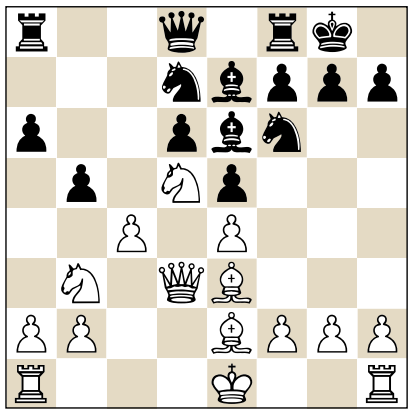
NOTES BY
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

SI 11.2 – B92
Vishy Anand
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
London 2015 (7)

Since the beginning of the event, I had been feeling much more comfortable with Black opening-wise, and my +1 score at this point was still enough to tie for first place, but probably not for too long. So I was in the mood for a lively game.
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e2 e5 7.♘b3 ♗e7 8.♗e3 ♗e6



9.♘d5
Deviating from our game in St. Louis, which went 9.♕d3, allowing 9...♘c6 10.a3 d5, which is a different story.
9...♘bd7 10.♕d3 0-0 11.c4 b5



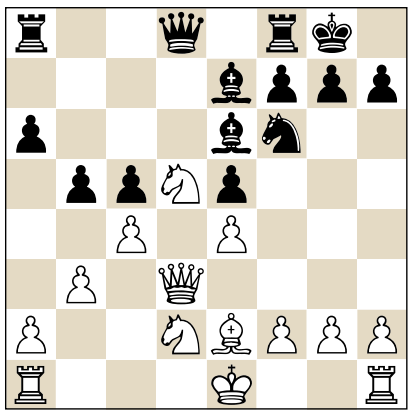
12.♘d2
Instead, 12.cxb5 axb5 13.0-0 ♗xd5 14.exd5 ♘b6! 15.♗xb6 ♕xb6 16.♕xb5 ♕a7 gives Black adequate compensation, with a lot of activity on the queenside as well as on the

dark squares, say, as soon as the dark-squared bishop reaches b6.

12...♘c5

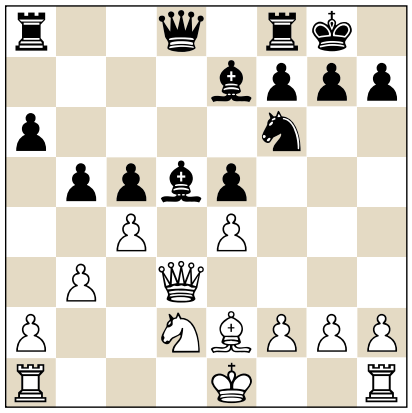
12...♖c8 is met by 13.b4!, and suddenly Black is lacking a freeing move.

13.♗xc5 dxc5 14.b3



14...♗xd5

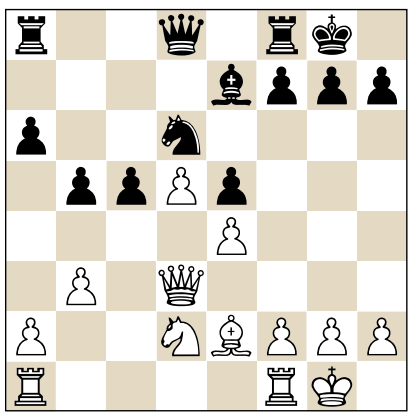
Here 14...♘xd5 15.cxd5 ♗d7 is also playable and maybe the best option available to Black. But getting my knight to d6 was too appealing to me.



15.cxd5

15.exd5? e4 is obviously wrong for White.

15...♘e8 16.0-0 ♘d6



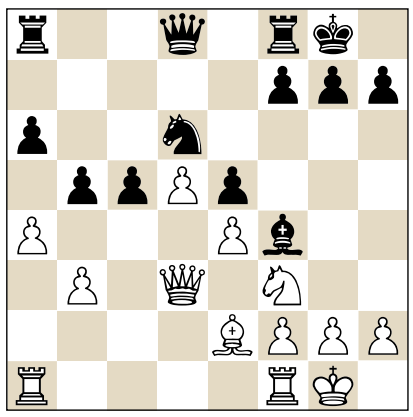
17.a4

A logical move to press on the queenside, delaying any decision as to which

> Or in Levon's words: 'A very impressive move, as it looks so awful.'

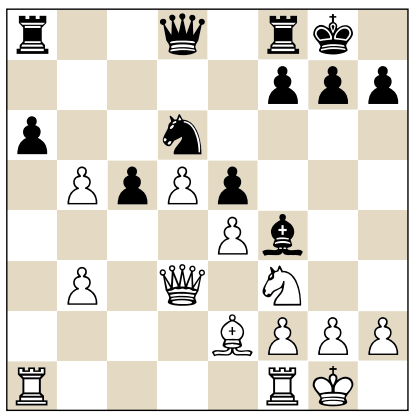
pawns to attack. At first I couldn't see a suitable plan to get activity here, as an immediate ...f5 would be too hasty, but as usual in these positions there is an unexpected concrete option. After 17.♘f3 c4! 18.bxc4 bxc4 19.♕c2 ♗f6 Black gets his counterplay in time.

17...♗g5 18.♘f3 ♗f4!



You wouldn't expect this bishop to stabilize on this square. Or in Levon's words: 'A very impressive move, as it looks so awful'.

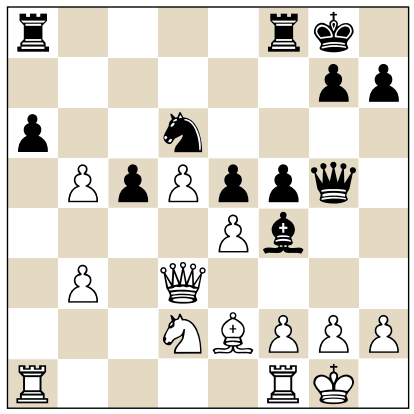
19.axb5



19...f5

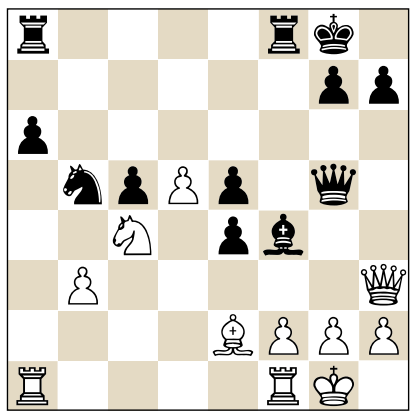
Why not? 19...axb5 20.♖xa8 ♕xa8 21.g3 f5 22.♘h4 fxe4 23.♕c3 ♗g5 24.♕xc5 ♕b8 is fine for Black, but no more. I was already inclining towards pushing my luck.

20.♘d2 ♕g5?



21.♖ad1? A very strange attempt to keep things under control in the centre, as it gives away the a-file.

The obvious reaction was 21.♘c4!. I thought this would lead to double-edged play after 21...fxe4 22.♕h3 ♘xb5,



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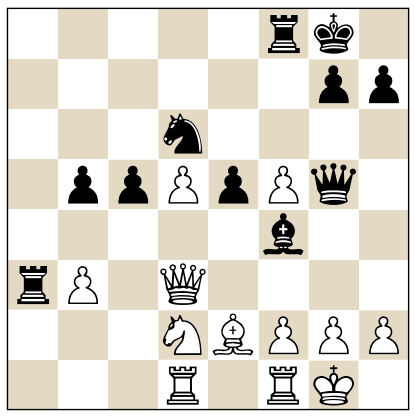
but my knight getting to d4 is of no help after 23.♘b6! ♘d4 24.♗c4 ♘f3+ 25.♔h1 ♘xh2 26.d6+ ♔h8 27.♘xa8 ♘xf1 28.♘c7, and Black is helpless against ♘e6.

21...axb5 22.exf5 ♖a3!



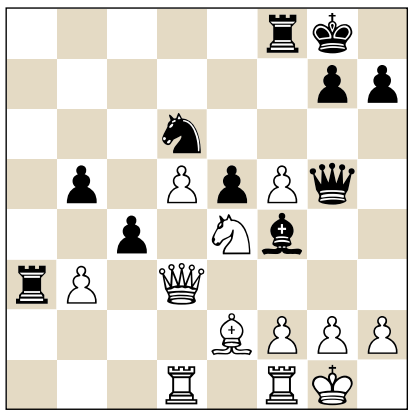
23.♘e4 After 23.♕c2 c4!? I had the following idea in mind: 24.bxc4 ♖h3!. And this seems to work better than I expected after 25.♘f3 (25.g3 invites 25...♗xg3!) 25...♕h6! 26.gxh3

DAVID LLADA

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave started the last day with good chances to win the London Classic, but by midnight he realized that he had not even qualified for the next GCT series.

♕xh3 27.♖fe1 e4 28.♗f1 ♕g4+! 29.♔h1 ♕xf3+ 30.♗g2 ♕h5 31.h3 bxc4 32.♖d4.

23...c4

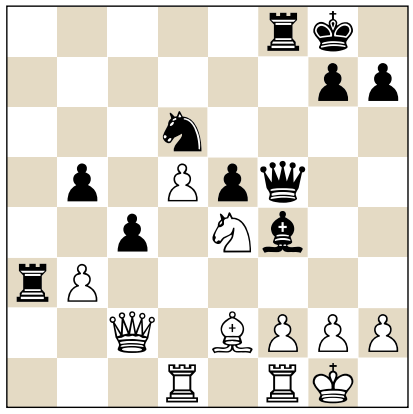


24.♕c2??

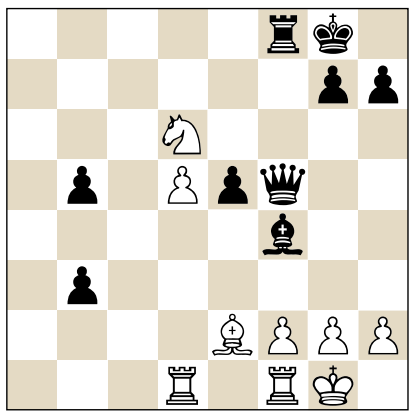
The pressure pays off. Vishy had clearly overlooked this. He probably wasn't too sure about his other options and missed my obvious reply. He should have gone 24.♕f3! ♕h6 (24...♗xh2+ leads to no more than a draw) 25.g3 ♖xb3 26.♕g2 ♗g5 27.f6! ♘xe4 28.♕xe4 ♕g6! (28...♗xf6 29.♖b1 makes White's life too easy. His ♕e4 is just what the doctor ordered to get enough counterplay and control) 29.♕xg6 hxg6 30.♖b1! ♖xb1 31.♖xb1 ♖c8 32.♗g4 ♖b8 33.♗e6+ ♔f8 34.fxg7+ ♔xg7 35.d6 c3 36.♗b3, and the game will probably peter out to a draw.

24...♕xf5

It is quite hard to understand what Vishy had actually missed.

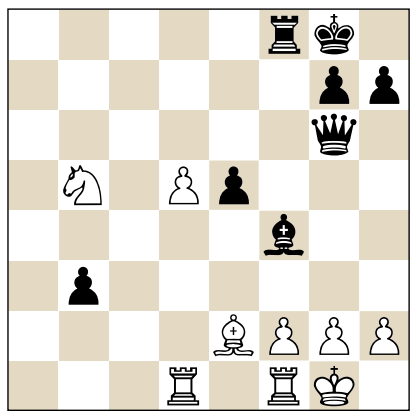


25.♕b2 ♖xb3 26.♕xb3 cxb3 27.♘xd6



Here I should still be careful not to allow exchanges, which would give White drawing chances. But my passed pawn, combined with attacking possibilities on White's king, gave me enough confidence to think I would win this game.

27...♕g6 28.♘xb5



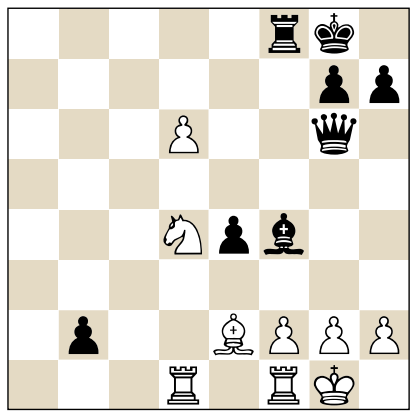
28...e4

After the game Vishy mentioned the following option to me: 28...♕c2! 29.♗d3 ♕c5!, and White's knight cannot get back into play, and after 30.d6 e4 31.♗e2 b2 32.d7 ♖d8 it's just over.

29.d6 b2

Both ...e3 and ...♗c1 are now tempting options on Black's agenda.

30.♘d4

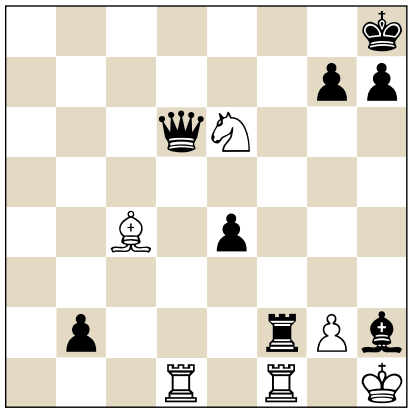


30...♕xd6!

Also enough to win was 30...♗xd6 31.♗c4+ ♔h8 32.♘e6 ♖b8 33.♖xd6 b1♕ 34.♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 35.♗f1 ♖b8, especially as White can't get his knight out in time: 36.♘d8 ♕f5! 37.♘e6 ♕e5 38.♖a6 e3, and wins.

31.♗c4+ ♔h8 32.♘e6 ♗xh2+ 33.♔h1 ♖xf2!

Not the only winning move, but definitely the prettiest. All Black's pieces are hanging, but the same goes for White, and the b-pawn decides the game in several cases.

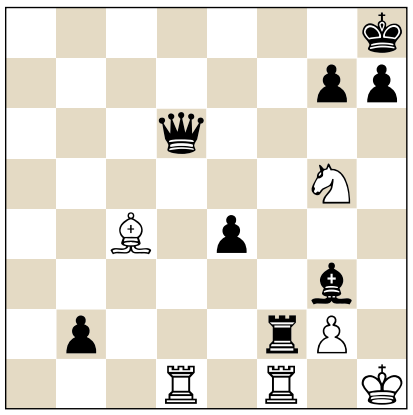


34.♘g5!?

White is also lost after 34.♖xf2 ♕xd1+ 35.♔xh2 ♕d6+.

Or 34.♖xd6 ♗xd6! (not, of course, 34...♖xf1+?? 35.♔xh2) 35.♖g1 ♖c2 36.♗d5 e3 37.♘g5 ♖c5! 38.♘f7+ ♔g8 39.♘xd6+ ♖xd5 40.♘c4 ♖h5 mate.

34...♗g3!



The threat of 35...♕h6 forces White to throw in the towel, as after 35.♖xd6 ♖xf1+ 36.♗xf1 ♗xd6 the b-pawn will be unstoppable. White resigned.

NOTES BY

Levon Aronian

EO 42.9 – A34
Levon Aronian
Veselin Topalov
London 2015 (9)

1.c4

At the age of 11, under the influence of a book by Dvoretsky that I had read about the strategy of choosing an opening repertoire, I began actively playing the English Opening, since it sometimes transposed into my favourite Sicilian with an extra tempo. The main idea of the opening, as I sincerely believed at that time, was to play c4, g3, ♗g2, ♘c3 and push the b-pawn if possible, without especially being diverted by Black's plans.

1...c5

The first surprise. Veselin usually plays either 1...e5 or 1...c6.

2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5

I also did not expect this. Most elite players have switched to the more tedious 3...♘c6.

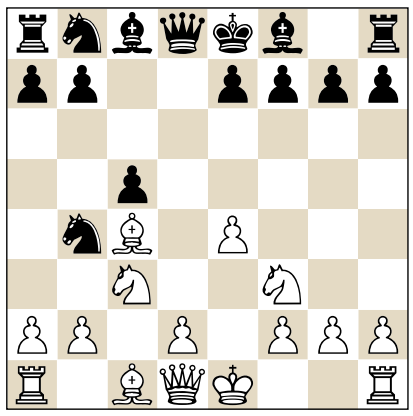
4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4

In two games before this I employed 5.d4 and 5.e3. The move in the game leads to more tactical play.

5...♘b4 6.♗c4

Some strong players, including Alexander Grischuk, one of the drivers of modern opening fashion, have played 6.♗b5+. In view of my love for Chess960, normally I am not against having my king in the centre.

'In view of my love for Chess960, normally I am not against having my king in the centre.'

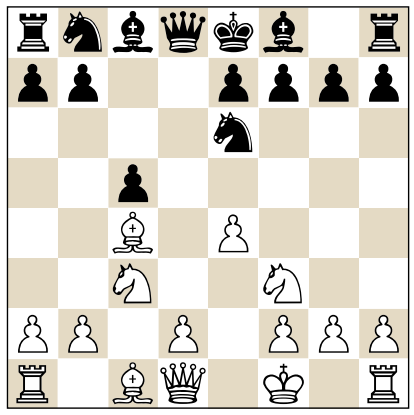


6...♘d3+

A curious fact: the well-known game in which Nimzowitsch played his famous ♘g3-♘h1 with the manoeuvre of his knight via f2-h3 to g5 and won against Rubinstein (Dresden 1926), was played with this very variation. Rubinstein chose the solid move 6...e6 and it has to be said that, despite its lack of popularity, this move is better than its reputation. Another move which can be recommended is 6...♗e6.

7.♔e2 ♘f4+ 8.♔f1 ♘e6

Here the paradoxical 8...♘d3 is also possible. To me the move in the game seems sounder.



9.b4

The most critical continuation. In a game between two stars of modern chess played in 2014, Nakamura chose 9.♘e5, and after 9...♘c6 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.♘a4 ♘d4 12.♘xc5 he acquired an extra pawn, which, however, did not prevent Giri from achieving his favourite result.

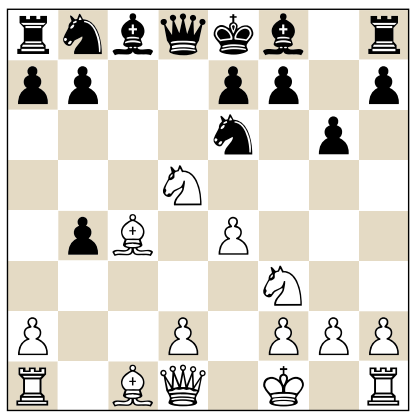
9...cxb4

9...g6 is a serious alternative to this move. As in games of the old masters, Black replies to a gambit with a counter-gambit.

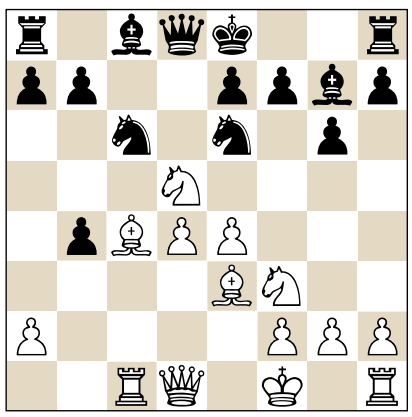
10.♘d5

10.♘e2 gives Black more choice and therefore demands more home preparation. Since other variations after 1.c4 are more often employed, I did not spend much time on this variation, and I aimed for the unusual position which arose in the game.

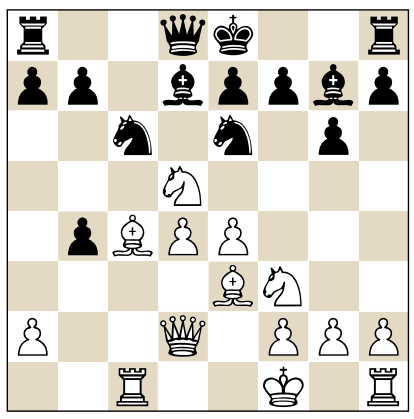
10...g6



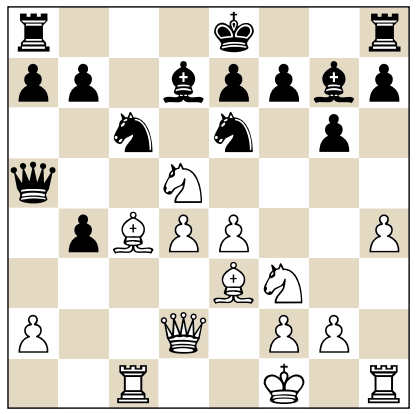
11.d4
A rare choice. Far more common is 11.♗b2, which also leads to interesting play.
The positions arising after the move in the game are rather curious. The two knights on d5 and e6 restrain each other, and often semi-zugzwang positions can arise, where both sides apparently have everything developed and stand well, but what to aim for subsequently is not clear. Ideally White needs to deploy everything towards the centre and try to exchange the dark-squared bishops, move his knight from d5 and trample the black pieces with the central pawns. For his part, Black wants to play ...♘c7 as soon as possible, with the exchange of his awkward e6-knight, or by ...♗d7/...a5, and then either ...♘a7-♘b5 or ...a4, with the ideas of ...b3/...♘a5, to provoke exchanges, which will enable him to find posts for his minor pieces.
11...♗g7 12.♗e3 ♘c6 13.♖c1
This move had not occurred before in practice, although it does not change much. In another game between strong players where this variation occurred, Piket-Van Wely, Escaldes 1998, Jeroen played 13.♕d2 and placed his rook on d1, which is also quite logical.



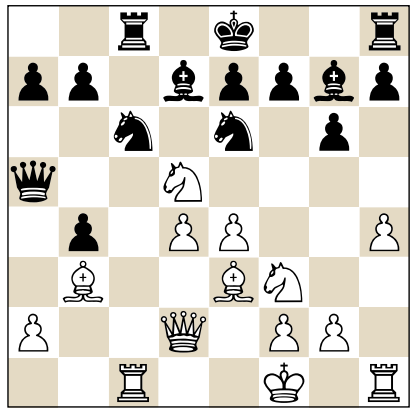
13...♗d7 My opponent handles the position in the spirit of modern chess. Without hurrying to castle, Black aims to quickly develop his queenside.
13...0-0 is more natural, but it is possible that, on seeing the furious speed with which I was making my moves, Veselin decided to choose a move which I might not have studied.
14.♕d2
Not a bad move, but after the game I realized that the developing 14.h4 h5 15.g3 was stronger. I thought that h4 would never run away from me, but I did not notice an important resource.



14...♕a5
We both thought that the b4-pawn was hanging, and for this reason Veselin chose an inaccurate plan. Black should have either supported his pawn by 14...a5 or continued his plan with 14...♖c8, since after 15.♘xb4 ♘xb4 16.♕xb4 he has the good move 16...b5, which I had overlooked, after which Black achieves important exchanges. For example, after 17.♗xb5 ♖xc1+ 18.♗xc1 0-0 Black has excellent play.
15.h4 An invitation to an endgame, which Black should have accepted. The more forceful move 15.♗b3 seemed to me to be not so convincing on account of 15...♕b5+ 16.♔g1 0-0 with the idea of ...♖fe8 and ...♘a5, although now, after analysis, I realize that Black does not have time for all this, since after h4-h5 White's attack develops of its own accord.



15...♖c8 From the practical point of view, the decisive mistake. As Veselin rightly commented after the game, Black was obliged to play 15...b3 and after 16.♕xa5 ♘xa5 17.axb3, although White has a pleasant position, for the moment nothing terrible has occurred.
But now Black cannot escape into a slightly inferior endgame.
16.♗b3



16...♕b5+ Topalov is well known for his resourcefulness, and with this

London 2015 — **cat. XXII**

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2834	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	5½	2858
2	Anish Giri	IGM	NED	2784	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	5½	2864
3	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	IGM	FRA	2773	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	5½	2865
4	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2788	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	5	2826
5	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	USA	2787	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	4½	2783
6	Michael Adams	IGM	ENG	2737	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	4½	2789
7	Alexander Grischuk	IGM	RUS	2747	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	1	½	4½	2788
8	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2793	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	1	½	4	2740
9	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2796	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	0	*	1	3½	2702
10	Veselin Topalov	IGM	BUL	2803	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	*	2½	2616

tiebreaks: Vachier-Lagrave beats Giri 2-1; Carlsen beats Vachier-Lagrave 1½-½ to take the title

Calculated risk. Having studied the rules carefully, Levon Aronian knew that a draw in the last round might be enough to get into the 2016 Grand Chess Tour.

move he tries an original method of defence, which does not work on account of White's great range of attacking ideas.

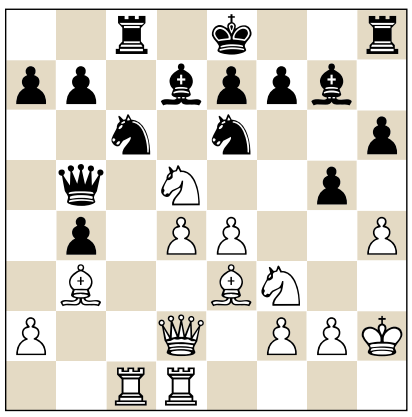
In the event of the simple 16...h5 17.g3, because of the ridiculous position of the queen on a5, Black has no convenient moves, since 17...0-0 loses to 18.♖xc6 ♗xc6 19.♘xe7+ ♔h8 20.d5 ♖cd8 21.♕c1 ♗b5+ 22.♔g2, when the white pieces are dominant.

17.♔g1 h6 Black tries to find time to play ...♘a5 in order to simplify the position, but I find an easy solution.

18.♔h2 g5

After 18...♘a5 19.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 20.♖c1 White has too many threats. 18...g5 is a part of Black's defensive plan begun with 16...♕b5.

19.♖hd1



19...♔f8

Here 19...g4 was consistent, after which White had the very strong 20.♘e5 ♘xe5 21.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 22.dxe5 ♗xe5+ 23.g3, with a winning attack, which, however, would have demanded energetic play by him. After the passive move in the game White is no longer obliged to play accurately.

20.♔g1 ♖d8

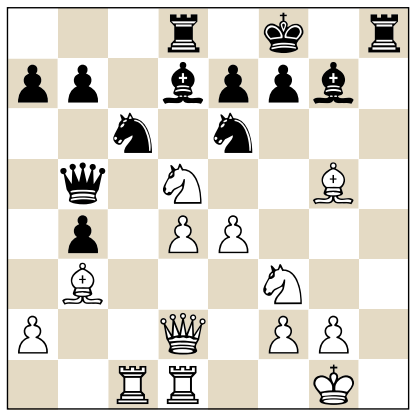
Now if 20...g4 the reply 21.♘e5 gains in strength, since the king is worse placed on f8 than on e8.

21.hxg5 hxg5 22.♗xg5

Grand Chess Tour

final standings

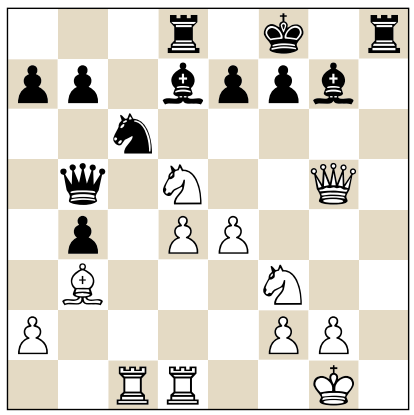
1	Magnus Carlsen	26
2	Anish Giri	23
3	Levon Aronian	22
4	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	20
5	Hikaru Nakamura	19
6	Veselin Topalov	18
7	Fabiano Caruana	14½
8	Viswanathan Anand	14
9	Alexander Grischuk	12
10	Adams Michael	5½
11	Jon Ludvig Hammer	1
12	Wesley So	1



22...♘xg5

This is equivalent to resignation. 22...♖h5 23.♗e3 ♗e8 was more resilient, with a lost position, but not yet automatically won by White.

23.♕xg5

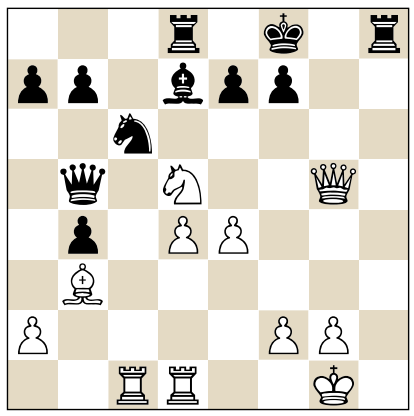


And now there is no acceptable defence against the threats of ♖c5 and ♖xc6.

23...♗h6 24.♕h4 ♗g7 25.♕f4 ♗h6

After 25...♗e8 26.♘g5 ♖d6 27.♘c7 Black suffers great loss of material.

26.♘g5 ♗xg5 27.♕xg5



On seeing that after 27...♗e6, apart from a forced win by 28.♖xc6, White has at least five easy ways of winning, my opponent resigned. ■

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHESS SPECTATOR

The London Chess Classic is one of the few chess events to draw considerable numbers of on-site spectators. **DAVID EDMONDS** attends the LCC each year – but wonders why he, or anyone else, makes the effort.

It is said that there was once a German pamphlet entitled *Rules for Chess Spectators*. It contained blank pages followed by a stark two word directive: 'Shut Up'.

That is rather a pithy summary of the role of the chess spectator. Which raises a chess poser: why would anyone show up at a tournament to watch live games? Why pay good money for an entry ticket that requires you to sit in silence, when you could watch from your comfy armchair for free on the internet while noisily munching crisps? What's the appeal of being present with the grandmasters in the hall?

■ ■ ■

To describe a December day in London as 'cold and wet' is a statement bordering on the tautological. But Tuesday, December 8th, 2015 is miserable. A few hundred people have, nonetheless, made the trek to the Olympia exhibition complex in west London for the 7th London Chess Classic – featuring ten of the best players in the world, including World Champion Magnus Carlsen.

For the past two years, Carlsen has been absent from the tournament. His appearance matters. Still only 25, the Norwegian already has to look warily over his shoulder at the emerging threat from several young pretenders, such as the 21-year-old Dutchman Anish Giri. But any tournament with pretensions for greatness requires Carlsen's presence.

And he's a draw for spectators and the media. He's the grandmaster that the newspapers and television programmes want to interview. In the run-up to the London Chess Classic he took part in a live (and excruciating) primetime BBC programme, in which he agreed to play the presenter. The game kicked off 1.d4 d5 2.f3 e5 3.b4 – and then deteriorated further, whilst the animated pusher of the white pieces delivered a running commentary in quadruple exclamation marks: 'ooooh, check!!!! I can't believe he's got me in check!!!! Absolutely unbelievable!!!!'. Miraculously, Carlsen retained his cool.

Today Carlsen's opponent is Lev Aronian. A few years back I made a

Perhaps due to the miserable weather, the auditorium is barely half full as Levon Aronian (coming from 'the cleverest nation on earth') and Magnus Carlsen make their first moves.

BBC radio programme about Armenia and its extraordinary modern record in chess, entitled, 'The Cleverest Nation On Earth'. Each match day, in London, the tournament impresario Malcolm Pein jauntily introduces the players, always hailing Aronian as coming from 'the cleverest nation on earth'.

As the grandmasters take their seats, there's a ripple of applause. The chess world has drawn a lesson from the Jesuits and their motto, 'Give me a child until he is seven and I will give you the man'. A different child makes a move on each board. Now infected for life with the chess bug the young boys and girls withdraw back into the audience. The clocks begin, the cameras click for 5 minutes or so, and then silence descends.

The auditorium seats 400. At the weekends, it's packed. But this wet afternoon it's barely half full. And after the initial flurry of opening moves, it empties out further. Many in the audience now move onto the analysis room. They include Peter Braun, from Mannheim, Germany, who has travelled to London for the Chess Classic for the past five years. I compliment him on his dedication, and ask why he comes. 'Not for the weather', he responds.

A FIDE master, Braun enjoys watching live chess and spends hours in the analysis room. His favourite commentator is Daniel King, though he's a fan too of the acerbic Nigel Short, whose absence he bemoans (Short is in Greece, having been struck down by illness just before he was due to fly to the UK). Also in the audience is Jonathan Century, once a strong tournament player, who makes an annual pilgrimage to the Classic. He is usually to be found in the commentary room too, as is sixteen-year-old Lauren Weaver, one of the few non-males present. She has popped in on the way home from school. 'I love the atmosphere', she says.

■ ■ ■

'Atmosphere' is an essential component of almost all sports. Of course, the question of whether chess is a sport is a hoary one and opinion differs. Chess and bridge are recognized as sports by the International Olympic Committee, but late last year (2015) there was a ruling in the UK's High Court that allowed the funding body, Sport England, to continue to exclude bridge from its list of sports. The semantics and metaphysics of sport is of more than mere intellectual interest. As a result of the legal ruling, bridge clubs or tournaments can't apply for grants doled out by Sport England.

Clearly there are overlaps between chess and sport, which is what makes the issue so contested. Yet when it comes to the role of spectators, chess diverges from other professional sports. For most sports, the crowd is integral to the enjoyment of the individual spectators. Take football. Even before the game begins there is the anticipatory tension of the walk to the stadium, the throng deepening as the stadium draws near. There are stalls with scarves and programmes, and others selling hot dogs, producing that overwhelming pre-match odour of fried onions.

The fans recognize that they have their part to play, that the emotional potential of the game can only be realized if they allow themselves to become immersed in the crowd and not just passive observers. There are Mexican waves, chants, songs. Invariably in sport, the crowd is partisan: partisanship heightens the

intensity of the viewing experience. Meanwhile, the referees and athletes are imbued by the crowd with moral virtues. The footballer who dives in the box is a cheat; the tennis player who throws her racquet to the ground in frustration is unsportsmanlike. Expressions of worship and outrage are cathartic. The games are enlivened by astute psychological insights bellowed at those on the field, such as 'The ref is a w****r'. The thrill of being at a live sports event can never be fully captured on television. It's not just the atmosphere. The perspective from the armchair is not the same as that from the stand. Inside the ground, the game seems faster, more frenetic.

All this goes some way to explain why people might choose to watch live sport. Yet none of these reasons apply to chess. I've not yet been to the chess tournament where the scale of the crowd is enough to attract hot dog stands. The spectators, as that German pamphlet mandates, are hushed. If any of them believe that the tournament arbiter is a w*****r they are restrained enough to keep it to themselves.

Chess players have their favourites – Vishy Anand is popular, because he's so obviously a good bloke (during the London Chess Classic news emerges that he has opened his Chennai home to slum residents who've been affected by the floods submerging parts of the city). But chess is not tribal – police are not required to stand outside the hall separating warring gangs of Grischuk and Caruana supporters. What's more, the auditorium spectators are kept too far away to see the board. You can watch the moves on screens – but that's no upgrade from following them online.

The Internet audience is big, though difficult to estimate accurately. On the London Chess Classic site alone there are hundreds of thousands of unique visitors. The sidebar comments roll by incessantly with online observers attempting to predict the next moves and, hilariously, abusing the contestants for their stupidity and blindness. 'I'm perfectly happy to see people make fools of themselves', says Pein.

'Police are not required to stand outside the hall separating warring gangs of Grischuk and Caruana supporters.'

The analysis room is the one place where there's a buzz. Chess analysis being hard work, the commentators operate on a rotation system. At the Classic they include the gangly Jon Speelman, who squints at the position through thick glasses, and who's dressed in a suit in a valiant but ultimately doomed attempt to mask his inherent scruffiness. There's daily grumbling by all the commentators at the frequency of the Berlin Defence – an opening which is solid, bypasses the fun of a congested middle-game, often produces long strategic games, as the players eke out nano-advantages, and then usually ends in a draw.

Later Speelman is taking on all comers in a simultaneous – another attraction for turning up to the tournament in person, rather than watching the games online. The Olympia complex is dotted with professional players, young and not-so-young, active and retired. As Malcolm Pein puts it, 'In chess, really great players are very accessible: you can go up to someone and ask for an opinion or an autograph. If you go to a premier league football game, you're only going to see the player on the pitch. In that sense you're far more involved in a chess tournament as you ever would be at a football match.' Daniel King concurs. 'The spectators like the book stall where they can leaf through material, they like to meet up with a mate, have a coffee and play a couple of skittles games. They like hobnobbing with the top grandmasters. The whole environment is rather special.'

And you do observe some things live that you would miss online. The extraordinary amount of time, for example, that Grischuk spends staring into space, even when it's his move. No doubt his brain is whirring through calculations, but he appears to have fallen into a semi-trance. He's regularly in time-trouble. When he looks surprised by an opponent's move, one commentator jests that 'we'll come back to that game in an hour'. Jonathan Century reckons he can better imagine what the players are thinking when he's watching them live.

■ ■ ■

These, then, are some of the advantages and pleasures of being present. But how do the contestants view the spectators? In other sports, the crowd affects the athletes, pumping their adrenaline, toying with their nerves, urging them on. But for grandmasters the audience can be a distraction, even an annoyance – the cough or sneeze or mumbled whispering from the auditorium can break concentration. The Women's World Champion Hou Yifan told me that she is sometimes asked for autographs mid-game. At the London Chess Classic, if the players need to go to the loo they have to walk through a public area – sometimes they're shepherded there by tournament officials whose job it is to stop cheating and to ward off autograph hunters, though, says Pein, 'we don't actually go into the cubicles'. Sixteen year-old Lauren Weaver is not autograph hunting at this tournament, 'I've got all their autographs already'.

Lev Aronian, surely the most affable player on the elite circuit, is grateful that there's some public interest. 'It doesn't make a difference to the chess, but I'm just happy that people

bother to come.' But not all elite players are quite so appreciative. In chess history, the man who most vocally expressed his irritation with spectators was Bobby Fischer, who defeated the Soviet title holder Boris Spassky in 1972 in the so-called Match of the Century. Long before he became champion Fischer had exhibited an almost preternatural ability to hear extraneous noises which others found hard to identify. A crunch of a chocolate wrapper would elicit a furious glare. Yet at other times he seemed so caught up in a game that he wouldn't have noticed a passing bulldozer. The '72 match was almost scuppered by Fischer's complaints about noise from the camera towers; in the end the cameras were removed, even though a deal had been struck with a film maker and even though Iceland's chief auditory expert Curt Baldursson tested the camera noise and declared that it could not 'have been picked up by human ear'.

In the bizarre and bitter 1978 World Chess Championship, played in the Philippines between the Soviet and loyal communist Anatoly Karpov and the Soviet defector Viktor Kortchnoi, a constant thorn was one specific audience member. His name was Vladimir Zukhar, and he was described as a psychological consultant. He'd been brought to the Philippines as part of the Karpov delegation. He would sit near the front, staring at Kortchnoi, who thought attempts were being made to hypnotize him. The Kortchnoi team adopted various tactics to counter Zukhar's malevolent parapsychological powers. Official complaints succeeded in having him moved a few rows back. Another ploy, adopted by Kortchnoi's partner Petra Leeuwerik, was to sit behind him, jab a pen in his back, and kick him in the shins. Most dramatic of all, Kortchnoi decided to meet quack with quack, importing his own gurus, including two from a religious sect called Ananda Marga, who in the description of Kortchnoi's aide Ray Keene 'wore saffron robes and turbans and adopted the lotus position in the immediate vicinity of the Soviet delegation.'

■ ■ ■

Nothing so eventful in London: no biro stabbings or orange-robed sages. Daniel King observes that in so far as there is a sect here it's made up of middle-aged-men carrying plastic bags. 'Why the plastic bags, why not a more practical backpack?', he muses, genuinely perturbed by this conundrum. Meanwhile, Aronian vs. Carlsen has petered out into a relatively uneventful rook and pawn ending and the world number one and number five shake hands on a draw. After the game the players are expected to withdraw to the analysis room and talk through the moves in public. In these sessions Carlsen can come across as impatient and contemptuous of lesser beings – though I rather savour his dry, laconic wit. Aronian insists he loves the match analysis. 'You can entertain people and I love to entertain.' He finds this part of the day tricky only after a painful defeat, when 'I can't really control what I say'.

The post-mortems are usually conducted in a genial manner, which irks spectator Peter Braun. 'They are too civilized. They like each other. There is not enough animosity. In former times you had players who hated each other, and then at least you had a fight at the board'. Despite making his annual trip from Germany he's dissatisfied with the contestants. 'They don't risk enough. They're too scared of losing. In the commentary room afterwards it's obvious that they're satisfied with a draw. The only player who's taking risks is Topalov.'

Topalov comes last in the tournament with only 2½ points. I don't suppose it's much consolation that he's a crowd pleaser. ■

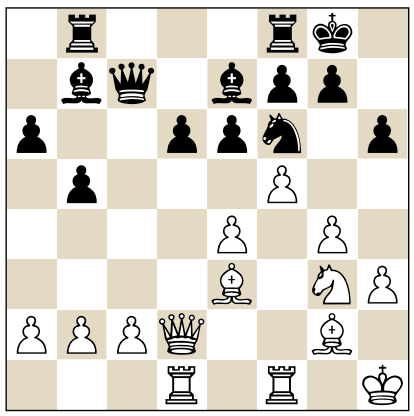
David Edmonds works for the BBC, and produced the chess series (presented by Dominic Lawson) Across The Board. He is also the co-author (with John Eidinow) of Bobby Fischer Goes To War.

Uncastling

ARTHUR VAN DE OUDEWEETERING

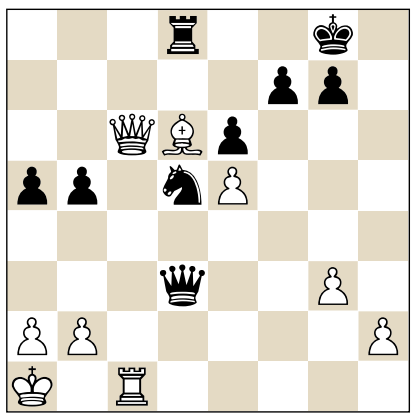
Suppose you have castled, but some time later you notice that now your rook would be better off on the h-file after all. A pity, of course, but too late. Or is it?

Let me remind you that castling can sometimes be done in an artificial way. For example, just look at Aronian's recent win against Topalov (see page 77 for Aronian's notes), in which the h1-rook was activated after ♔f1-g1-h2. Or consider this old theoretical variation in the Meran: 1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.d4 c6 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♗d3 dxc4 7.♗xc4 b5 8.♗d3 ♗b7 9.e4 b4 10.♘a4 c5 11.e5 ♘d5 12.♘xc5 ♗xc5 13.dxc5 ♘xc5 14.♗b5+ ♔f8, when one of Larsen's original ideas was to follow up with ...h6, ...g6 and ...♔g7.
So why would it not be possible to execute the same kind of creative manoeuvres in reverse?



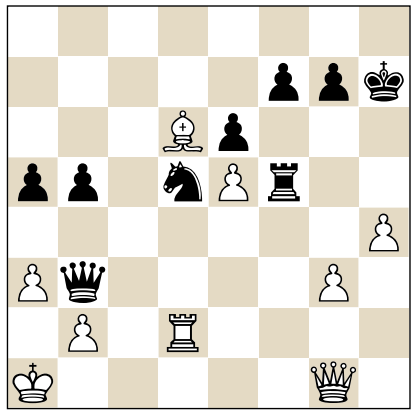
This position is from Anand-Vachier-Lagrave, Stavanger 2015 (see New In Chess 2015/5 for the actual follow-up 18...♖bd8 19.♗xh6). During the live transmission the following suggestion was discussed: **18...♔h7 19.g5 hxg5 20.♗xg5 ♖h8!?**, intending ...♔g8, to which Aronian jokingly added that Black could have saved on castling by playing ...♔f8 and ...♔g8 right from the start.
But jokes apart, the manoeuvre looks like a reasonable attempt to activate the black rook again.

While watching the above game online, I immediately thought of this one:



Oll-Hodgson
Groningen 1993
position after 34.♗d6

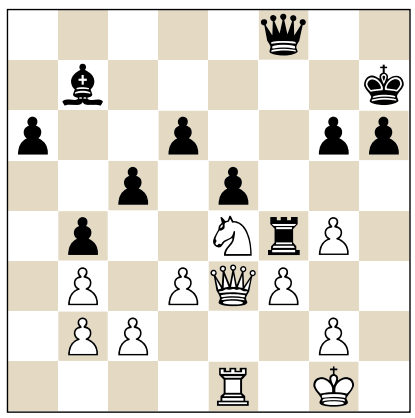
The black rook lacks space here, partly due to White's beastly bishop on d6. Hodgson, resourceful as ever, found an original solution to this problem. **34...♔h7! 35.♕c5 ♔g6 36.h4 ♖h8 37.a3 ♖h5 38.♕g1 ♔h7 39.♖d1 ♕b3 40.♖d2 ♖f5**



What a difference compared to the first diagram! The formerly beastly bishop is dominating only air, while Black's rook has joined the other forces as planned. White quickly succumbed, allowing a nice combinational finish as well: **41.g4 ♖f4 42.♕b1+ ♔g8 43.g5 b4 44.♖d3 ♘c3 45.axb4 ♕a2+ 46.♕xa2 ♖f1+ 0-1**

The game could also serve as a fine illustration of what is frequently called Makagonov's rule, named after Smyslov's trainer Vladimir Makagonov: 'When no other obvious plan is available, just try to improve your worst piece'.

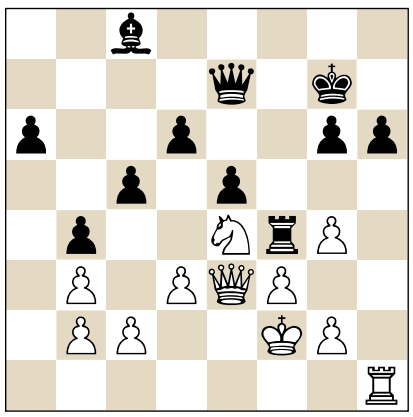
Here is a more obvious example.



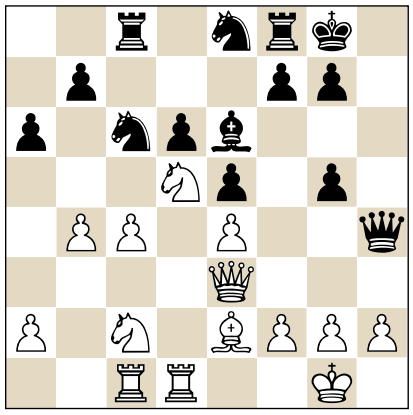
Klaman-Spassky
Moscow 1957
position after 32...♕f8

The white rook would love to go to the half-open h-file, aiming at Black's backward h-pawn and king. So **33.♔h2** 33.♔f2 seems to run into 33...♗xe4 (33...♖xg4 34.♘xd6!) 34.dxe4 ♖xg4, but then 35.g3 deprives both the queen and the rook of square f4, leaving Black struggling to coordinate. White is clearly better. **33...♔g7**
Interesting was 33...♕e7!?, when

34.♔g3 can be met by 34...♗xe4 35.dxe4 h5 36.♖h1 ♕g5, and here White's king is a target as well. **34.♔g3 ♗c8?! 35.♖h1 ♕e7 36.♔f2!**



And suddenly g2-g3 is in the air, while after **36...♗xg4 37.♔g1** 37.♔e2!. **37...♗h5 38.g4 ♗xg4 39.fxg4 ♖xg4+ 40.♔f1 ♖f4+ 41.♔e2** Spassky's future helper went on to beat the future World Champion.

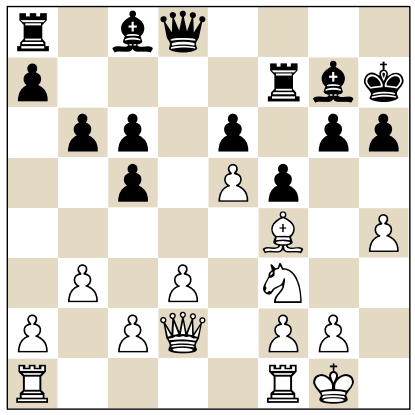


Velikic-Guijarro
Skopje 2014
position after 19.♕e3

19...♔h7!? Naturally. uncastling is a little bit more time-consuming than castling itself. As a result, White gets a chance to generate counterplay on the other side. **20.♕b6 ♖h8 21.♘ce3?!** As 21.♕xb7 ♔g8 22.h3 ♗xh3 would get Black's attack going, White first decides to deploy some defenders, but this allows the c6-knight to join the attack. Perhaps White should have made it possible for his queen to return to f2 after 21.g3 ♕h6 22.f3. **21...♘d4 22.♗d3 ♔g8 23.♘f1** White has parried the immediate threat, and now Black has to prove that the time spent uncastling was not wasted. **23...g4!**

24.♕xb7? Understandable, but 24.c5 ♘f3+ 25.gxf3 gxf3 26.♘de3 ♘f6 27.cxd6 would have speeded up White's counterplay. **24...♘f3+ 25.gxf3 gxf3 26.♘de3 ♘f6** Now White is too slow to meet the threat of 27...♘g4. **27.c5 ♘g4 28.cxd6 ♕xf2+ 0-1**

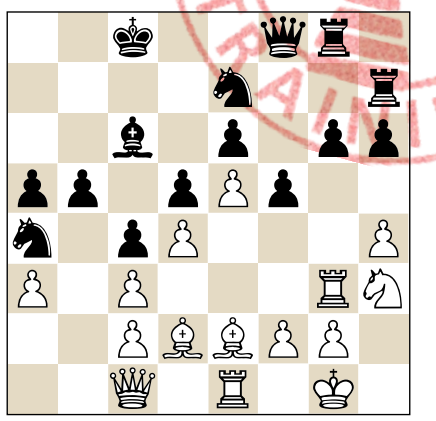
Clearly, a half-open h-file can be an incentive to uncastle. But in the following example White also decides his rook would be better on h1 after all.



Balashov-Petrushin
Kstovo 1994
position after 16...♔h7

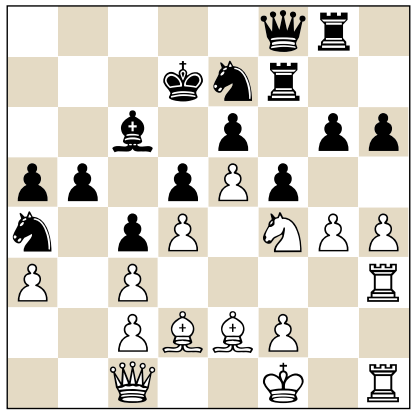
17.♔h2!? a5 18.a4 ♗a6 19.♖h1 ♖d7 20.♔g1 Mission completed. Now White obviously intends to follow up with h4-h5. **20...c4 21.bxc4 ♗xc4 22.♕e3 ♗d5 23.h5 g5 24.♗xg5** Without this sacrifice White's manoeuvring would have been pointless. **24...hxg5 25.♘xg5+ ♔g8 26.h6 ♗f8** 26...♗xe5 just fails: 27.h7+ ♖xh7 28.♘xh7 ♗xa1 29.♕g3+ ♔f7 30.♘g5+ ♔f8 31.♖h7. **27.c4 ♗xc4 28.h7+** Instead, 28.♕g3! ♔h8 29.dxc4 ♖d1+ 30.♔h2! would have been White's cleanest route to victory, although White won anyway.

‘When you are looking for ways to activate your rook, uncastling could be a solution worth remembering!’



Kamsky-Hansen
Groningen 1995
position after 32...♗c6

Although the h-file is closed, Kamsky opted for **33.♔h2 ♔d7** With hindsight it is easy to criticize this move, as the king will prove to be an inadequate defender of the e6-pawn much later. **34.♖h1 ♖hh8 35.♔g1 ♖h7 36.♘f4 ♖f7 37.♗f3 ♖h7 38.♘e2 ♖gh8 39.♔f1 ♖f7 40.♖gh3 ♖hh7 41.♘f4 ♖hg7 42.♗e2 ♖g8 43.g4**



With two white rooks behind the h-pawn it is obvious which move Black wants to avoid. Yet Kamsky's last move tempted the former Junior World Champion to play exactly that: **43...g5? 44.hxg5 hxg5 45.♘xe6!** Even 45.♘h5 would do: 45...fxg4 46.♗xg4! ♖xf2+ 47.♔g1. **45...♔xe6 46.♖h6+ ♘g6 47.gxf5+ ♖xf5 48.♗g4 ♔d7 49.♖1h5 ♔c7 50.♗xf5 ♕xf5 51.♖xg5 ♕e4 52.♕d1**, and White won.

To be honest, in this last game – as you might have guessed – White actually did not castle. In general, though, when you are looking for ways to activate your rook, uncastling could be a solution worth remembering! ■

New Openings Please

Publishers seem to think that the beginning of a new year is the ideal time to be learning new openings. At least that's what MATTHEW SADLER thought as he was submerged by opening books and DVDs. Three get five stars!

To begin with, *The Berlin Wall* by Victor Bologan (ChessBase DVD) fits my current mood very nicely indeed. I can well imagine myself on a wintry day, wrapped up in blankets in my cold, dank house, muttering 'Bah, Humbug' to myself and exchanging queens on move 8, while in the rest of the street happy children play Poisoned Pawn Najdorfs and sacrifice pieces with gay abandon. Considering how distressingly popular the opening is, it has attracted little attention from authors. John Cox's book for Quality Chess is the only one that springs to my mind, and that was written in 2008.

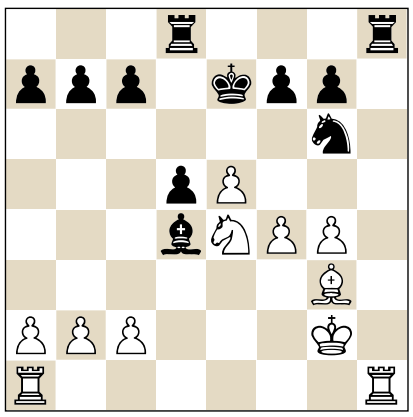
You would normally assume with an ending line that little of significance could have occurred in seven years, but of course the Berlin Wall is no typical endgame line. A very strong player told me recently that everyone is analysing the Berlin just as if it was a main-line Dragon: move-for-move and with the emphasis on the memorisation of concrete variations.

I can only imagine how awful it must be to be a second in the modern game. I remember complaining bitterly to Joel Lautier back in 1994 when he asked me to analyse some Symmetrical English systems (1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7). All those move orders (a3 first, or ♖b1 first, or e4, but only when Black has played ...♘f6, and so on and on and on) were very depressing to analyse at 2 in the morning and I was begging him to switch back to 1.d4 very soon. My goodness, I'd be doing the Berlin all tournament nowadays!

What was I looking for from this DVD? First of all, I was hoping for a gentle introduction to the aims of the opening. How should Black develop initially, and how should he proceed in the middlegame thereafter? I was also hoping to get some grip on the plans that White has in the position: what should Black fear, what can go wrong for Black? How successful was the DVD from this point of view? Mixed feelings there for me. This DVD examines the popular Black scheme of development involving playing the bishop to d7 and the king to c8 against pretty much everything. Black players get a one-size-fits-all development scheme, which is always handy when you're starting to play an opening.

Bologan also recommends the same opening scheme against the Anti-Berlin Wall systems (4.d3) that Grischuk used successfully against Topalov in London (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 0-0 6.♘bd2 d6 7.h3 and now 7...a6 8.♗xc6 bxc6 9.0-0 ♖e8), which is another nice endorsement. Looking back at the notes I took, I can also see a number of positions where Bologan highlighted typical middlegame ideas for Black, so that's also very good.

From the White side however, I'm still as confused as ever. The only White plan that really registered with me while watching the DVD was the idea of bringing the knight to h5, and even that plan could either be stopped or allowed, with a good position for Black in both cases! It would have been handy to give a few examples where things go wrong for Black in order to highlight the typical mistakes that Black can make. Without that it's hard to understand the relative value of competing move orders (of which there are many in the Berlin!). For example, while watching the Anand-Carlsen game in the London Classic VIP lounge, we were all getting pretty excited about White's position here:



To my eyes, White seems to have achieved pretty much the dream result in a Berlin: the two bishops have been neutralized and White's kingside majority is mobile and dangerous.

And finally, I watched the DVD quickly before the London Classic started, hoping to be able to display some grandmasterly knowledge when the Berlin came up. In the 7 games where the Berlin Wall endgame arose, Black put his king on e8 (not c8!) in all of them! Another very strong player then claimed that the plan of ...♗d7 and ...♔c8 is not the best when White plays h3, which completed my confusion!

In conclusion, this is a good starting point for anyone wanting to learn the Berlin. I would recommend though that you spend some additional

'Everyone is analysing the Berlin just as if it was a main-line Dragon.'

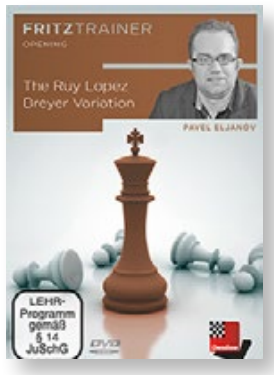
time looking through some less positive games for Black. The top players make it look easy for Black but there's months of analysis behind it!

■ ■ ■

We take the next two items together as they overlap substantially (and Bologan often quotes Eljanov's DVD in his book): *Bologan's Ruy Lopez* by Victor Bologan (New In Chess) and *The Ruy Lopez Breyer Variation* by Pavel Eljanov (ChessBase DVD).

Bologan's Ruy Lopez is an enormous work of more than 500 pages. Bologan analyses two different systems for Black against the Ruy Lopez – the Marshall (if you're happy with a draw, I guess) – and the Breyer, and also covers all the sidelines leading up to both openings (for example all sorts of anti-Marshall systems with d3). Eljanov's DVD focuses purely on the Breyer. Both are aimed at reasonably advanced players: Eljanov covers a lot of ground and is fairly heavy on variations, Bologan's book is a bit too big to be an easy read for anyone under 2000.

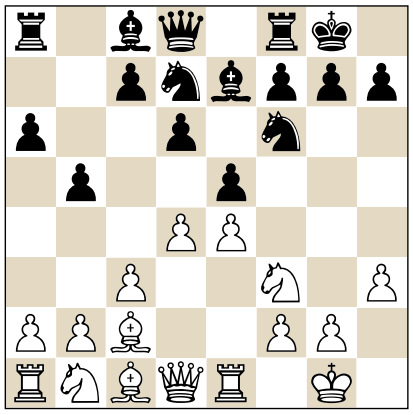
The Berlin Wall
by Victor Bologan
ChessBase dvd
2015
★★★☆☆



The Ruy Lopez Breyer Variation
by Pavel Eljanov
ChessBase dvd
2015
★★★☆☆

My knowledge of both systems is pretty hazy, so I'm not very well qualified to judge the quality of the recommendations given. However, I could well imagine Bologan's book developing into a well-thumbed bible for aspiring 1...e5 players. First of all, the theoretical sections are very complete. As far as I could see, there was only one idea in Eljanov's DVD that I didn't see in Bologan's book:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘b8 10.d4 ♘bd7 11.♗c2

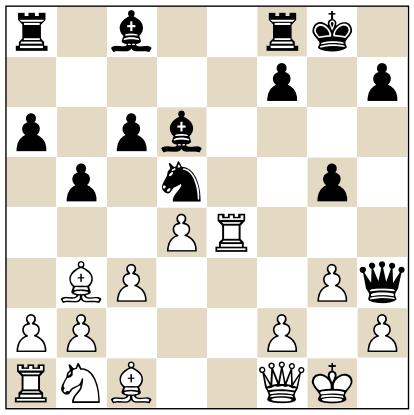


Eljanov thinks that this is very interesting, but it's only been played in 58 games (none of them high-class) in my database! For the rest – as you'd expect – Bologan covers all the lines in Eljanov's DVD and more.

Secondly, Bologan includes a large number of readability innovations that make more and more sense as you re-read the material. For example, each chapter is summarized in three short sections: 'Traps', 'Transpositions & Move Order' and 'Ideas to Remember'. He also provides a brief introduction to each sub-variation, which helps keep you focused on why a particular line is important to memorize. And finally, there are also the 208 diagram snapshots of Breyer, Marshall and Anti-Spanish ideas, which are a lovely reference during your own analysis. It really does help to check out what Bologan says about a certain pawn structure before getting down to concrete analysis.

Thirdly, Bologan provides alternatives in many lines. For example, in the Marshall.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♘xe5 ♘xe5 11.♖xe5 c6 12.d4 ♗d6 13.♖e1 ♕h4 14.g3 ♕h3 15.♖e4 g5 16.♕f1



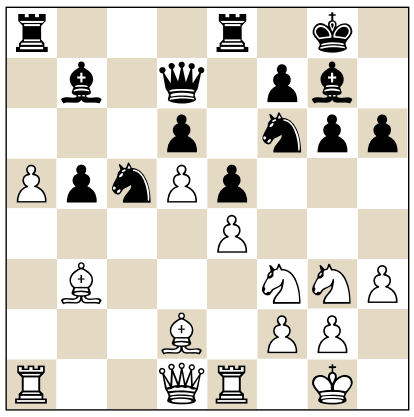
Bologan analyses both the line he considers best – 16...♕xf1+ – and the line 'for those who hate to exchange queens' – 16...♕h5!. Now that's what I call service!

The Breyer is such a complicated and rich system, I would definitely recommend buying both these sources if you want to play it. It was interesting to see the game Vachier-Lagrave-Adams from London follow a line from the book up to move 23.

Sadler on Books

RL 25.14 – C95
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Michael Adams
London 2015 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘b8 10.d4 ♘bd7 11.♘bd2 ♗b7 12.♗c2 ♖e8 13.♘f1 ♗f8 14.♘g3 g6 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗d2 ♗g7 17.a4 c5 18.d5 c4 19.b4 cxb3 20.♗xb3 ♘c5 21.c4 ♕d7 22.cxb5 axb5 23.a5

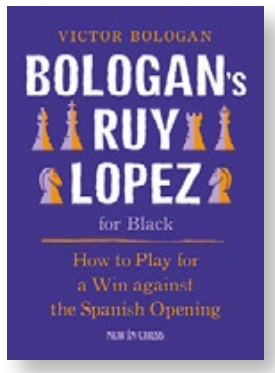


Here Bologan recommends 23...♖ec8 followed by ...♗a6, eyeing the idea of ...b4 as a pawn sacrifice activating the light-squared bishop. It shows the richness and solidity of Black's position that Mickey could play a completely different idea and equalize without too much difficulty. Or in any case, enough to make the repetition attractive for MVL!

23...♖eb8 24.♗c2 ♗c8

This typical Lopez plan of redeveloping the bishop on b7 (which is blocked by White's pawn chain on e4 and d5) to d7 feels right and the combination with the transfer of the f6-knight to a6 works extremely well here.

Bologan's Ruy Lopez
by Victor Bologan
New In Chess
2015
★★★★★



Beating the French Vol 2
by Rustam Kasimdzhanov
ChessBase dvd
2007
★★★★★

25.♖b1 ♕d8 26.♕c1 ♔h7 27.♕a3 ♘e8 28.♘e2 ♘c7 29.♘c3 ♗d7 30.♘a2 ♘7a6 31.♘b4 ♗e8 32.♖a1 ♘xb4 33.♕xb4 ♘a6 34.♕b3 ♘c5 35.♕b4 ♘a6 36.♕b3 ♘c5 37.♕b4 ½-½.

It just shows how much potential there still is to add something new of your own to these lines.

■ ■ ■

Beating the French Vol. 2 by Rustam Kasimdzhanov (ChessBase DVD) is the follow-up volume to Kasimdzhanov's excellent first volume on the McCutcheon Variation (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗b4). Here he deals with probably the most popular line at the moment: the Classical French positions arising after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3. This DVD is meant for both White and Black players, though it seems to me that White is having more fun in the DVD! That may also be a reflection of the current theoretical status of the variation.

As Kasimdzhanov points out, thousands of games have been played with the variation, so it isn't possible to provide exhaustive coverage of the whole line. He has therefore chosen to focus on three lines:

1. 7...cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♕b6, with which both Nakamura and Agdestein have had excellent practical results.

2. 7...cxd4 8.♘d4 ♗c5 9.♕d2 and now both the old main line 9...0-0 and the German GM Thomas Luther's favourite 9...♘xd4 10.♗xd4 ♗xd4 11.♕xd4 ♕b6.

3. The current main line 7...a6.

That's pretty good, but just bear in mind that the other popular move 7...♗e7 is not covered, so White players will need to do a little extra work to get a complete repertoire.

The content is generally excellent. I thought that the coverage of 7...cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♕b6 was absolutely outstanding. Kasimdzhanov manages to present this complex line with its many transpositional possibilities and computer-fuelled miraculous defences in such a way that it seems logical and understandable – no mean feat! I also liked the coverage of Meier's games in the old main line very much:

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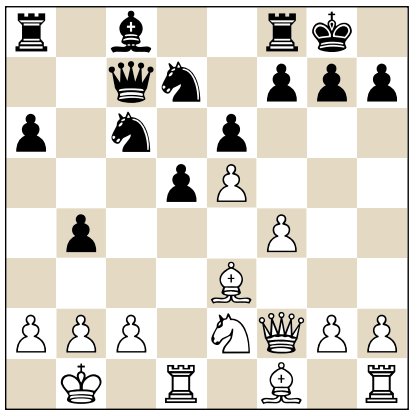
The Bishop's Opening & The Italian Game
by Sergei Tiviakov
ChessBase dvd
2015
★★★★☆

The Classical Sicilian
by Mihail Marin
ChessBase dvd
2015
★★★★★

The Double Queen's Gambit
by Alexey Bezgodov
New In Chess
2015
★★★☆☆

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♗c5 9.♕d2 0-0 10.0-0-0 a6 11.♕f2 ♗xd4 12.♗xd4 b5 13.♗e3 ♕a5 14.♔b1 b4 15.♘e2 ♕c7



Here Kasimdzhanov provides fantastic analysis of the line 16.♘g3, but concludes that 16.♘d4 is better, quoting Kramnik's motto that 'The central strategy is always the best'. Another great piece of wisdom to add to my list!

The coverage of the main line 7...a6 is a little patchy in places, but Kasimdzhanov still presents a number of interesting avenues for further exploration. I'm always a little hesitant to give top marks to DVD's, but I think that this one deserves it. This is cutting-edge grandmaster insight into one of the most popular lines of the French at the moment.

■ ■ ■

The Bishop's Opening and The Italian Game by Sergei Tiviakov (ChessBase DVD) is a nice companion volume to one of Sergei's earlier DVD's entitled *Attacking with the Italian Game and the Ruy Lopez.*

In the earlier DVD, Sergei examined typical attacking motifs that arise in both the slow Ruy Lopez variations (with d3 or ♕e2) and the Italian Game, illustrating these with examples from his own games. A number of these themes were quite surprising: for example, the idea of castling queenside in the Ruy Lopez (I thought I was the only lunatic who had done that!). In his new DVD, Sergei focuses on the theory of the Bishop's Opening and the Italian Game and explains how to reach the typical positions from which you could launch an attack. Sergei's DVD's are always very well-prepared, delivered concisely with clear evaluations and opinions, and this one is no exception. I think that both DVD's together would make a nice present for any 1.e4 player struggling against 1...e5 !

And the last of the DVD offerings for this month's column: *The Classical Sicilian* by Mihail Marin (ChessBase DVD). As a long-time Najdorf player, I've always tended to view any Sicilian where Black puts his queen's knight to c6 with a lot of suspicion: that knight just looks much better on d7, freeing the a8-h1 diagonal for a raking bishop on b7. I spent a lot of time as a professional trying to get to grips with the Classical Sicilian, but I never felt comfortable enough to try it out in practice. I might well have done if I'd had Marin's DVD then! It is great to watch! Marin makes heavy use of the question and answer format in which the viewer is asked from time to time to solve a tactical puzzle. I'm not normally a fan of this format – I have to get up and reach for the mouse, which is difficult before dinner and quite impossible after – but Marin's questions are entertaining, not too difficult and they also give you the feeling that you're learning something important about the opening as you solve them. Quite appropriately, the coverage of the main 6.♗g5 and f4 lines is particularly excellent.

■ ■ ■

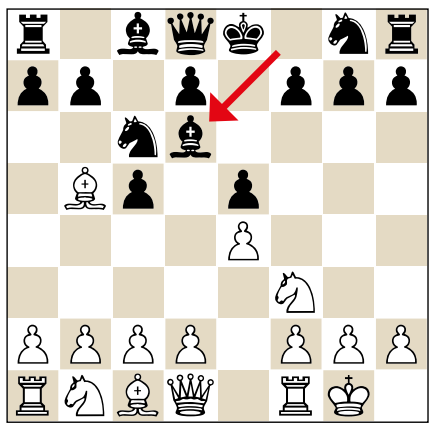
To round off, we'll take a look at a quirky book called *The Double Queen's Gambit: A Surprise Weapon for Black* by Alexey Bezgodov (New In Chess). There's always something a little worrying about a book advertising a surprise weapon on its title page. After all, once it's published, it's not really a surprise weapon anymore, and how good is the opening anyway once the shock effect has gone? The strange thing about the opening is that the line in the title – 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c5 – is really the weakest part of the whole thing.

Bezgodov makes a valiant attempt to keep these lines afloat, such as: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c5 3.cxd5 ♕xd5 4.♘f3 cxd4 5.♘c3 ♕a5 6.♘xd4 or 3...♘f6 4.e4 ♘xe4 5.dxc5 ♕a5+ 6.♗d2 ♘xd2 7.♕xd2 ♕xd2+ 8.♘xd2... but I wasn't very convinced.

I was much more interested in his analysis of the lines arising after an early ♘f3 by White, for example 1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 c5 3.c4 ♘f6. Here Bezgodov makes a good case for a number of reasonable Black alternatives and as always with this author, he presents plenty of original analysis. In summary, pretty interesting but I don't think that 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c5 should become your main opening with Black! ■

Jobava's Favourite in the Rossolimo Sicilian

JEROEN BOSCH



4...♗d6!?

'In its most ambitious form you could state that Black is playing a Closed Ruy Lopez in which he no longer laboriously needs to prepare ...c7-c5.'

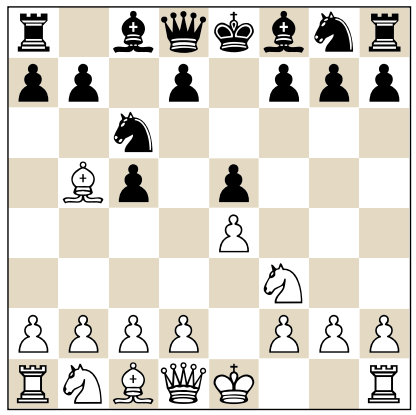
The Rossolimo is still going strong as a major weapon for White to avoid the Open Sicilian. Take for example the game Giri-Shirov from the European Team Championship in Reykjavik (November 2015). White did not appear to have all that much perhaps after 3...g6 4.♗xc6 dxc6 5.d3 ♗g4 6.♘bd2 ♗g7 7.h3 ♗xf3 8.♘xf3 ♘f6 9.e5 ♘d5 10.0-0, but somehow the resulting 'simple' position seems more pleasant for White and Giri certainly made it look easy (don't be fooled by the cross-pin that Shirov overlooked on move 30 – White already had an appreciable advantage in that position).

Certainly it makes sense in a practical game to avoid the main options that White knows so well following:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5

One such byway is 3...♘a5!?, on which I have written earlier (for our loyal readers, see issue 2004/7). Now moving the knight to the edge is surprising. The point is that Black avoids the exchange of bishop for knight, while a subsequent ...a6 and ...b5 is a very Sicilian thing to do. At the same time, exploiting the fact that Black has chosen to disregard the centre may tempt White into playing d2-d4, thus leading to an Open Sicilian type of position!

In our present SOS, Black is driven by quite an opposite line of reasoning. For the main idea of **3...e5!?** is to increase central control, making the pawn advance d2-d4 much harder to achieve!

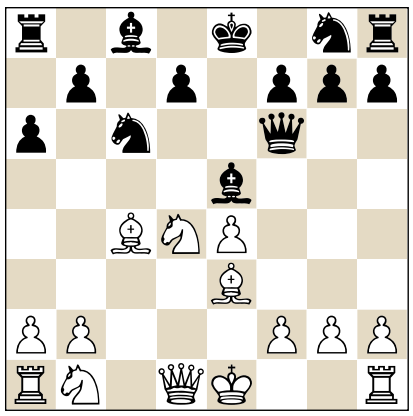


In its most ambitious form you could state that Black is playing a Closed Ruy Lopez in which he no longer laboriously needs to prepare ...c7-c5, as in, say, the Chigorin (9.h3 ♘a5) and the Breyer (9.h3 ♘b8) systems. Now this is certainly painting a very rosy picture of Black's system, but it is never bad to have a dream (both in chess and in life, I suppose).

– Now the first thing to observe is that 4.♗xc6 dxc6 (a kind of Ruy Lopez Exchange) does not win White a pawn: 5.♘xe5 ♕d4, and only Black can be better. Instead, 5.d3 ♗d6 or 5...f6 makes things easy for Black (he has a superior Exchange Ruy Lopez). While 5.0-0 can also be met by 5...♗d6 or 5...f6, rather than by 5...♗g4 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♕xf3 ♘f6 8.d3 ♘d7 9.♕g4!?, with a slight edge in M.Muzychuk-Harika, Khanty-Mansiysk 2014.

– A normal move is 4.c3, when your

database will reveal that 4...♕c7 is the move that is most commonly played. This position is almost always reached via the move order: 2.c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.♗b5 (best is 4.♗c4!) 4...♕c7. Just as in our main line I would recommend 4...♗d6!?, when 5.0-0 transposes, while 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 is met solidly by 7...♗e5 8.♗e3 a6 (8...♕f6 9.♗xc6! dxc6 10.0-0 is less clear) 9.♗c4 ♕f6!



and Black is doing well.

– In case of 4.♘c3 Black can also go for our patented 4...♗d6!? (but 4...d6 is very respectable, too), when 5.♗c4!? ♘f6 6.d3 h6 7.a4 ♗c7 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 ♘e7!? 10.♗e3 b6 11.a5 ♗b7 12.♖e1 d5 gave Black a pleasant game in Skripchenko-Cramling, Monaco 2015.

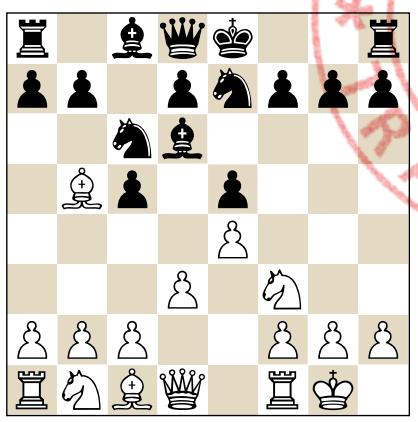
Instead of the minor alternatives on move 4 that we just looked at, the most important move is clearly the logical **4.0-0**. Now when this Cinderella of opening theory (3...e5) is mentioned at all, it is usually to observe that White is better after 4...♘ge7 5.c3 g6 6.d4 cxd4 7.cxd4 exd4 8.♗f4 ♗g7 9.♗d6, a position that is often reached via 3...g6.

Instead I would like to concentrate on **4...♗d6!?**, a move favoured by Baadur Jobava and first played by Igors Rausis.

Now if White plays too timidly, Black will get a very decent Closed Ruy Lopez. So White should get his central act together and aim for a quick d2-d4 in order to show up the odd position of the bishop on d6.

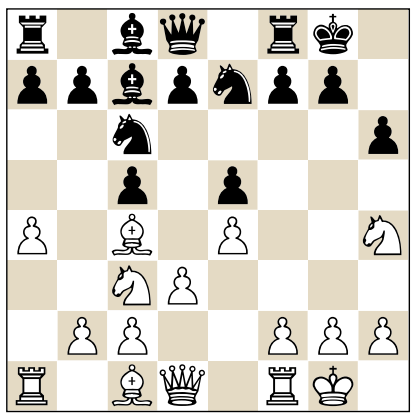
5.c3

A slower option is 5.d3 ♘ge7



and now preparing d2-d4 after all shouldn't cause Black any worries: 6.c3 0-0 7.♗e3 a6 8.♗a4, when 8...b6!? 9.♘bd2 (9.d4) 9...♗c7 10.d4 cxd4 11.cxd4 exd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 d5 equalizes, while 8...b5 9.♗b3 ♗b7 10.♘bd2 ♘a5 11.♗c2 ♘g6 12.d4 cxd4 13.cxd4 was M.Muzychuk-Harika, Beijing blitz 2014, and now Black should have played 13...exd4 14.♘xd4 ♖c8, with decent counterplay for her slightly inferior pawn structure.

More in line with 5.d3 is aiming for a kind of Giuoco Piano with 6.♘c3 0-0 7.a4 ♗c7 8.♗c4!? h6 (8...d6 9.♘g5!?), when 9.♗e3 d6 10.♘d2 should be met by 10...♗a5!? (worse is 10...♘g6?! 11.♕h5! ♘f4 12.♗xf4 exf4 13.♘d5±). Instead practice has seen 9.♘h4!?, when Black must certainly pay attention:



9...♗a5! (9...d6 fails to 10.♕h5! ♘d4 11.♗xh6! gxh6 12.♕xh6, with an attack; 9...♘d4 10.♕h5! is also very unpleasant for Black) 10.♕h5 ♗xc3, and now the lines fork:

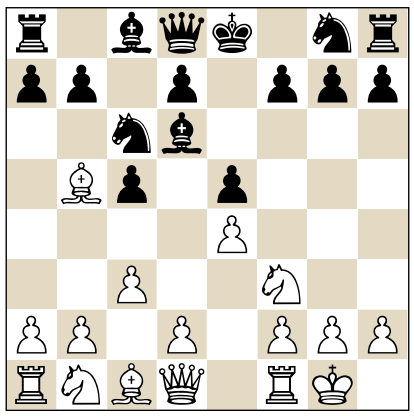
– 11.♗xh6 gxh6 12.♕xh6 d5! 13.exd5 ♗d2!? 14.♕xd2 ♘xd5 15.♗xd5 ♕xd5 16.♕g5+ ♔h7 is a draw, and 15...♕xh4 16.♖ae1 is worth exploring – for both sides!

– 11.bxc3 d5 12.exd5 (12.♗a2) 12...♘xd5 13.♘f5?! ♗xf5 14.♕xf5 ♕d6 (14...♘xc3 15.♗xh6 ♕d6! 16.♗e3 ♘e2+ 17.♔h1 ♘ed4) 15.♗d2 ♘b6 16.♗a2 c4!, and Black later won a tense game in Goudriaan-Jobava, Wijk aan Zee B 2014.

A positional approach with 5.♘a3 ♘ge7 6.♘c4 ♗c7 7.c3 0-0 8.♗xc6 ♘xc6 9.♘e3 aims to control the central squares d5 and f5, but Black is fine, as was borne out by:

– 9...♘e7 10.♕b3 b6 11.d4 exd4 12.cxd4 cxd4 13.♘d5 (13.♘xd4 ♗b7∓) 13...♘xd5 14.exd5 ♗d6∓, Sozin-Bayev, Kemerovo 2014,

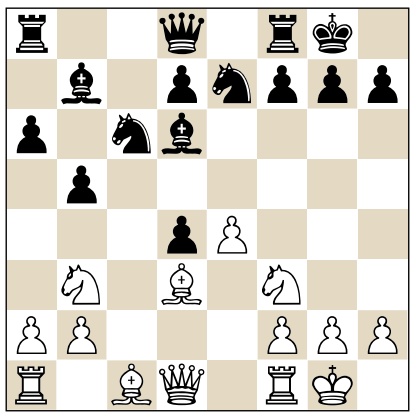
– and 9...♗b6 10.d3 d6 11.♘d2 ♗e6, with equal chances; S.Novikov-Konovalov, Moscow 2012.



5...♘ge7 6.d4 6.♘a3 0-0 7.♘c4 ♗c7 transposes to the previous note.

6...cxd4 7.cxd4 exd4 8.♘xd4

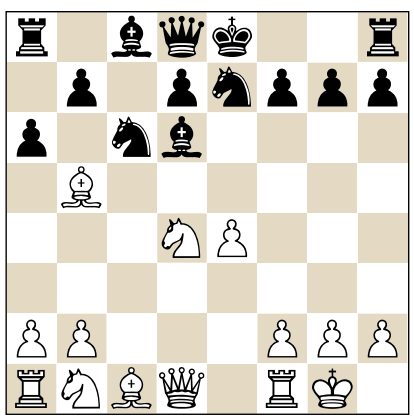
The main line, but 8.♘bd2 is also not without logic. After 8...a6 9.♗c4 0-0 10.♘b3 b5 11.♗d3 ♗b7 Black is doing well in a complicated middlegame:



– 12.♘bxd4 ♘xd4 (12...♕b8!?) 13.♘xd4 ♕c7 or 13...♗c5;

– 12.e5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 (13.♗xh7+? ♔xh7 14.♘xe5 ♕c7!∓) 13...♗xe5 14.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 15.♕h5+ ♔g8 16.♕xe5 ♖c8 17.♘xd4 (17.♕xd4 ♖c4) 17...♘c6 18.♘xc6 ♖xc6;
– 12.♗g5 h6 (12...f6! 13.♗h4 ♕b6∓) 13.♗h4, and now, rather than 13...♕e8?! (Smirin-Harika, St. Petersburg 2014), 13...♖e8 is still fine for Black.

8...a6



and now the lines fork:

Variation I – 9.♗e2
Variation II – 9.♗c4

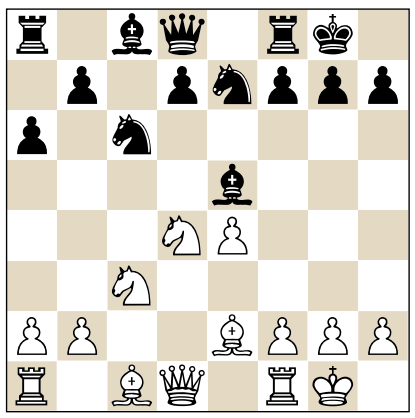
Note that in case of 9.♘f5 ♘xf5 10.exf5 Black achieves immediate equality with 10...♗e7! 11.♗c4 d5! 12.♗xd5 ♗xf5 13.♘c3 0-0.

Variation I

9.♗e2 0-0 10.♘c3

The actual move order in Bartel-Jobava, Legnica 2013, was 10.♗e3 ♗e5 11.♘c3.

10...♗e5



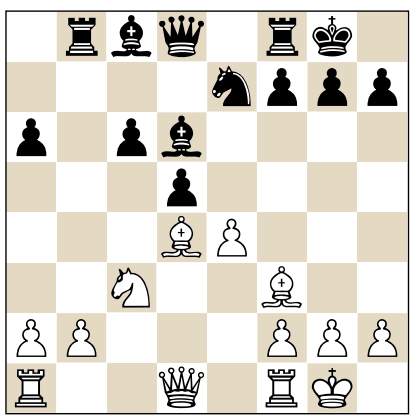
11.♗e3 White develops and aims to keep his knight in position. He cannot prevent ...d5, though.

Nothing much is 11.♘xc6, when Black can improve his pawn structure. Best is 11...bxc6, when 12.f4 ♕b6+ 13.♔h1 ♗d4 is about even, and so is 12.♗e3 d5. Practice has seen 11...dxc6 12.f4 (12.♗e3!±) 12...♗d4+ 13.♔h1, which was Karthikeyan-Vijayalakshmi, Doha 2014, and now Black has 13...b5, followed by ...c5, with a good game.

If White withdraws the knight, 11.♘f3 ♗xc3! 12.bxc3 d5 will give sufficient activity to compensate for the two bishops: 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♕d2?! ♕a5 15.c4 ♘c3! (15...♕xd2 16.♗xd2 is a slight plus for White in view of the bishop pair) 16.♗d3 ♗g4! 17.♘g5 (17.♗b2 ♘a4) 17...♘e2+ (even stronger was 17...♖ad8!, when White is in real trouble) 18.♗xe2 ♕xd2 19.♗xd2 ♗xe2, and White had decent drawing chances due to the opposite-coloured bishops; Czakon-Piorun, Poland 2015.

11...d5 12.exd5

12.♘xc6 bxc6 is pretty similar to 11.♘xc6 bxc6. The game Matinian-Jobava (Legnica 2013) now continued 13.♗d4 ♗d6!? 14.♗f3 ♖b8



– when 15.exd5 cxd5 is equal, and 15...c5 16.♗e3 ♘f5 gives surprisingly decent compensation for the pawn.
– 15.♖e1 c5! 16.e5 ♘c6! 17.exd6 ♘xd4 (17...cxd4 18.♘xd5 ♕xd6) 18.♗xd5 ♕xd6 was the (equal) game

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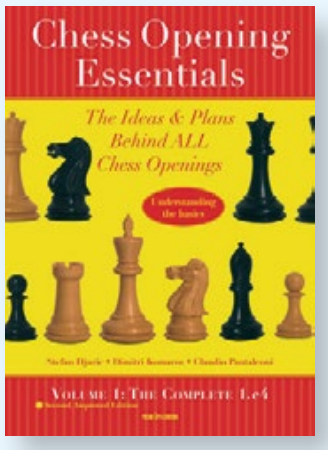

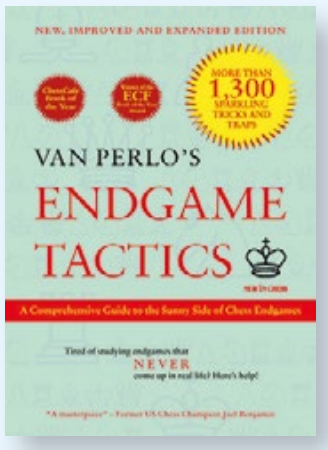
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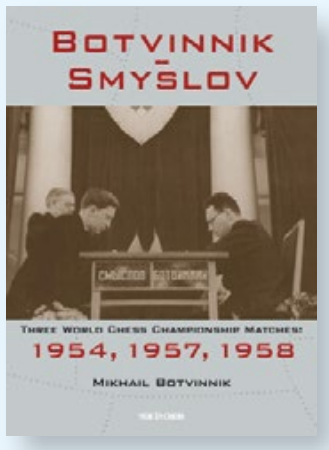

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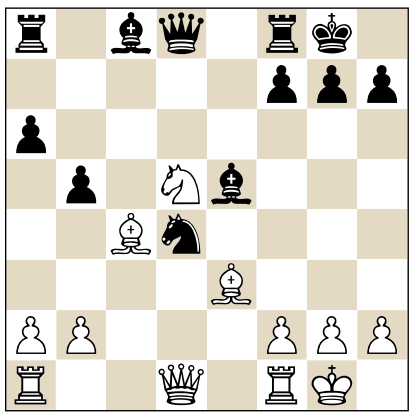
position from which Jobava eventually scored a full point.

12...♘xd5 13.♘xd5 White has nothing either after 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♘xd5 cxd5 15.♗d4.

13...♘xd4 Far more accurate than 13...♕xd5 14.♗f3.

14.♗xd4 A more dangerous option is 14.♗c4!?, when 14...♘f5 15.♗b6 superficially looks good for Black in view of 15...♗xh2+ or 15...♕h4. However, after both moves White preserves some edge: 15...♕h4 16.f4 ♗d6 17.♖f3±;
15...♗xh2+ 16.♔xh2 ♕h4+ 17.♔g1 ♕xc4 18.♖c1 ♕xa2 19.♘c7± ♗e6 20.♘xa8 ♖xa8 21.♕d2 ♕b3, and Black managed to draw in Michalik-Gallagher, Meissen 2013.

So it is better to meet 14.♗c4 with 14...b5!

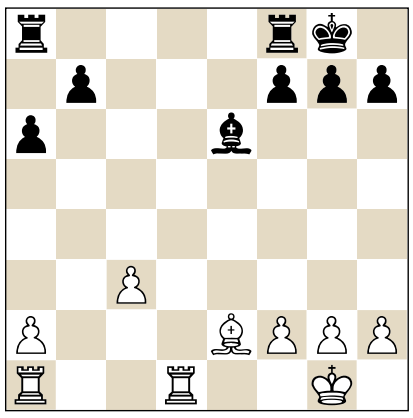


15.♗xd4 ♗xd4 16.♕xd4 bxc4 17.♕xc4 ♗e6 18.♖fd1 ♖b8!, when Black easily achieves the draw.

14...♕xd5 15.♗c3

15.♗xe5 ♕xe5 16.♕d2 ♗e6 was quickly drawn in Kr.Georgiev-V.Georgiev, Sunny Beach 2013.

15...♕xd1 16.♖fxd1 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♗e6



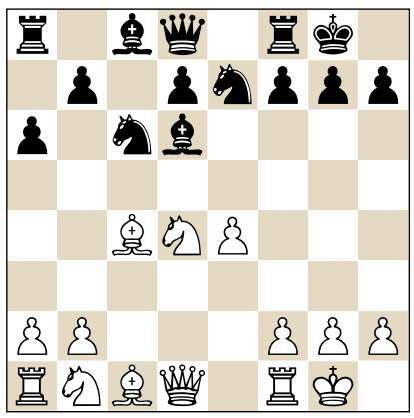
18.♗f3 ♖ab8 19.♖ab1 b5 20.♖d6 ♗xa2 21.♖a1 ♗c4 22.♖dxa6, and from this dead-equal position the game continued until move 35, when the players agreed to the inevitable draw, Bartel-Jobava, Legnica 2013.

Variation II

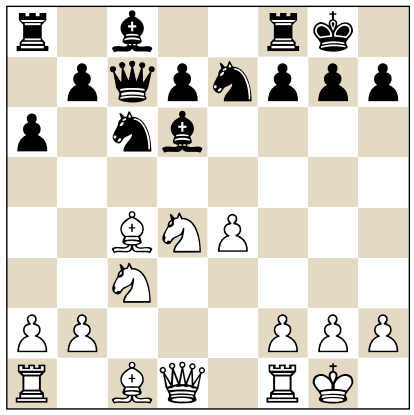
9.♗c4

This is more active than 9.♗e2, with the added advantage that Black cannot equalize so easily with ...d5. On the other hand, the bishop may be more vulnerable on c4 (in view of moves like ...b5 and ...♕c7).

9...0-0



10.♘f3! White prophylactically protects h2. In Lagno-Harika, Khanty-Mansiysk 2014, White just continued developing with 10.♘c3, when 10...♕c7 is a kind of indirect attack on the bishop.



A few sample lines:

11.h3 ♗h2+ 12.♔h1 ♘xd4 13.♕xd4 ♗e5 14.♕d3 d6 15.♗e3 ♗e6 looks nearly equal;

11.♘f3 is met by 11...♘e5 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5, when c4 and h2 are under attack. After 13.♘d5 ♘xd5 14.♗xd5 ♗xh2+ 15.♔h1 ♗f4 Black in all likelihood will have to return the pawn at some point to complete his development.

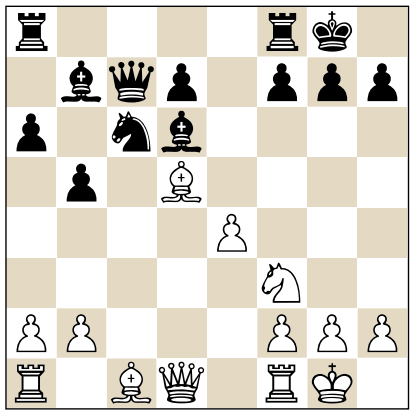
11.♘xc6 dxc6 12.f4, and now, rather than the game continuation, 12...♗e6 13.♗xe6 fxe6, when 14.♕b3 would have been unpleasant. Black should go 12...b5 13.♗b3 a5!?, a suggestion from the engines. Black generates ample counterplay in that case.

After 10.♘f3 a logical sequence is:

10...♕c7 11.♗b3 b5

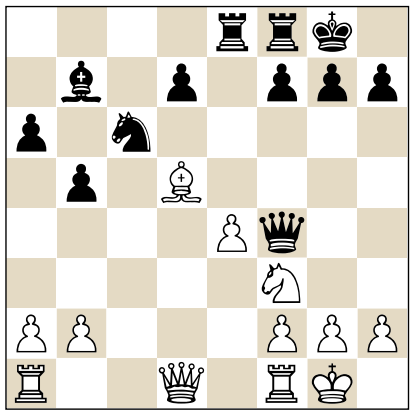
An interesting option is 11...♘e5!?.

12.♘c3 ♗b7 13.♘d5 ♘xd5 14.♗xd5



when White had a slight edge in Solak-Jobava, Legnica 2013.

In the game Jobava was suffering after **14...♖ae8?! 15.♗e3 ♗f4 16.♗xf4 ♕xf4**



when **17.a4!** gave Solak something to play for.

Best, therefore, would have been **14...♗c5 15.♗g5 ♘e7**, when there is no real cause for concern.

Conclusion

3...e5 is an interesting way to deviate from the main lines in the Rossolimo. After 4.0-0 Black should continue with Jobava's favourite move 4...♗d6, when White has achieved very little by way of an opening advantage so far. ■

NEW IN CHESS TRAINING

How to make a successful chess video

Why does one chess video barely cause a ripple, whereas another one gets more than a million views? **MAXIM DLUGY** takes a look at the most popular videos on the Web and gives tips on how to produce a winner. And he is speaking from experience.

The direct links to all videos mentioned in this article can be found on our website: newinchess.com/dlugyvideos

One evening last Summer, close to midnight, I got a text from my son: 'My friend just told me your video is on the front page of *Reddit*'. I texted back: 'What does that mean?' My son replied: 'You're on the front page of the front page of the Internet. You're at over half a million views'.

We continued texting back and forth with me gradually finding out what *reddit.com* is and how it works. And soon I was thinking how I can try to monetize this sudden popularity and where this popularity actually comes from?

By the time I woke up the video in question was at 950,000 views, and it finally broke a million views three days later.

This surprising turn of events got me thinking: What does it take to create a popular chess video? And why is it that some videos with interesting chess content are not as popular as some in which the creator is clearly just starting out in chess and still confuses chess terms and squares on the board?

I will attempt to answer those questions, while presenting to you the most popular chess videos of all time, and perhaps give you some ideas about creating your own chess video channel.

To begin with, let's try to agree on what constitutes a chess video. Would a recipe for a chess cake be considered a chess video or a method to have some smart fun with your food? In my book, anything that promotes the game of chess would qualify, but what wouldn't qualify are commercials which help you make 'the smart move' and choose a company or product. So, with all due respect, the Nerdy Nummies chess cake video, with over 16.4 million views, would not make my list, although if you want some chess cake, go to *YouTube* and search for 'chess cake – nerdy nummies'.

The same goes for the beautiful musical Chess and the all-time greatest chess song 'One Night in Bangkok' by Murray Head, which I had the privilege of hearing live at the opening night of the musical in London in 1986, during the Kasparov-Karpov World Championship match.

That video boasts over 26.7 million views, but is really a tribute to its musical content, rather than the chess angle. If you want to hear that classic, go to *YouTube* and search for 'One Night in Bangkok – Murray Head (HQ Audio)'.

Essential ingredients

After watching dozens of successful real chess videos, I have found three main reasons for their popularity:

1. Speed and, therefore, the shortness of the video. Bullet chess, for example, is such a popular item that fans flock to see how players move pieces faster than the crooks in three-card monte. It doesn't matter if it's not possible to even understand where the pieces go – the speed of motion combined with the knowledge that chess is a game for serious thought creates a comic effect that gets people laughing even from watching the ends of serious tournament Armageddons.

2. Humour. Whatever the scenario, everyone loves a good hearty laugh. A number of videos at the top of the chess video ladder made it there just because they are genuinely funny. Of course, unbelievable grimaces from the likes of Garry Kasparov and other greats will elicit a smile – people love to see others suffer; just think of good old gladiator battles.

3. 'L'. Lowest common denominator. Perhaps a bit snobbish coming from a grandmaster, but I believe that this is the most successful element in the popularity of a chess video. The ability to explain a difficult game in easy-to-understand language is extremely well received. Those of you thinking about creating your own *YouTube* channel and trying to monetize it, should truly concentrate on this 'L' factor. The amazing success of videos created by Kevin Butler (see below) from *chesswebsite.com* is living, breathing proof of the L factor.

The real deal

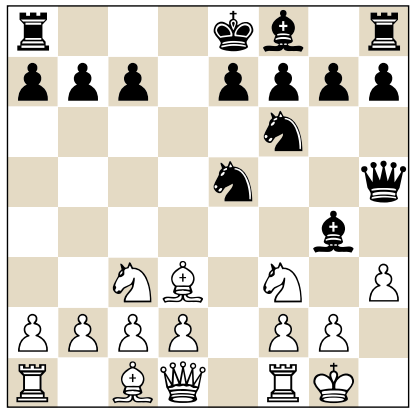
Now let's have a look at the top chess videos, the most watched videos of all time.

1 Magnus Carlsen vs Bill Gates

The number 1 chess video is one of chess skill meets world fame. Magnus Carlsen versus Bill Gates, live on Fredrik Skavlan's Norwegian late-night chat show, with 30 seconds for the former and two minutes for the founder of Microsoft. Magnus plays for mate from move 1 and delivers it by move 9, as his opponent cannot believe his luck and takes two of Magnus' pieces in just two moves. While the first one was fully edible, the second one was a Trojan and led to mate in one.

1.e4 ♘c6 2.♘f3 d5 3.♗d3 ♘f6 4.exd5 ♕xd5 5.♘c3 ♕h5 6.0-0 ♗g4 7.h3 ♘e5?

Bill Gates goes 5.♘c3, nothing wrong yet.



Here, Bill correctly queried: 'Really?' and took the bishop with **8.hxg4**. Magnus responded **8...♘fxg4**, but alas the Microsoft billionaire couldn't switch to defensive mode with 9.♖e1!, with a winning game against the World Champion, and went for **9.♘xe5?? ♕h2** Mate.

Of course, the meeting of these titans would get play no matter what game they were engaged in, but I think the speed and the element of surprise – seeing Bill Gates with a winning position, if only for one second – was what moved over 3 million people to watch it in under two years. You can add to the viewing figures for the all-time most popular chess video by going to *YouTube* and search for 'Skavlan: Magnus Carlsen vs Bill Gates'.

2 How To Beat A Monkey at Chess

This is a very popular but borderline chess video created by a fun-loving team of musicians who try

very hard to beat a *monkey* at chess. That is the name of the video, and I have to say that the puns and chess terms in this hilarious skit qualify for chess content, especially as the team tries to outwit the monkey in a real chess game, eventually overcoming the odds. This comic relief has had over 2.99 million views, and I am sure readers will be glad to add to those large numbers, by going to *YouTube* and searching out 'How To Beat A Monkey At Chess: The Musical'.

3 Speed Chess Game

Featuring yours truly celebrating his return to tournament chess at the closing of the 2005 US Championship. I was invited to play after 15 years and got a wildcard; and at the closing ceremony, I had had a good few glasses of red wine when the winner of the tournament, Hikaru Nakamura, challenged me to a 1-minute match. I am sure Hikaru could take me down even without the drinks, but playing him 1-minute in a drunken frenzy was too much for this writer. Someone managed to record one of the games; and when it was posted on *YouTube*, it went ballistic, breaking records of all sorts. Since being posted in November 2006, almost 2.1 million people have seen this bullet game, with Hikaru putting on his magic and me playing a reasonable second fiddle. If you haven't seen it already, search on *YouTube* for 'Speed Chess Game'.

Clearly, speed and the short duration of this video, along with some funny comments from Ben Finegold kibitzing, made this video a hit.

4 How to play chess properly

Clocking in at just over 2 million views, this is a wonderful comic spoof on the Kasparov-Short World Championship match in London back in 1993 and made for a BBC comedy show. It unveils different undercurrents of the chess world, most of them implausible. It's a bit vulgar, but then, who doesn't like a good pissing match? Humour is definitely what is keeping this video so popular. Judge for yourself: search on *YouTube* for 'How to play chess properly'.

5 The Queen's Gambit

This is a truly enigmatic video; and created by someone who introduces himself as 'Kevin, from *chesswebsite.com*', and already it has over 1.973 million views. More interestingly, he has a lot of followers who watch many other openings explained in layman's terms to the general public. The author himself is not a very strong player, makes mistakes in chess notation, and puts pieces on strange squares, but he is extremely enthusiastic and hard-working in explaining as much as he knows.

That's him! The highly successful Kevin of *chesswebsite.com*.

Kevin's following is huge, as he is able to play on the 'L' factor to the fullest, explaining ideas that he has just recently understood himself. The

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feeling that he is really trying to give his best has created quite an amazing fanbase, with scores of comments thanking him for the fine job he is doing in explaining the most basic opening lines. If you want to learn how to play the Queen's Gambit, search on *YouTube* for 'Chess Openings: The Queen's Gambit' – just don't put your knight on c6... pleeease!!

6 FOOL a Genius with this Awesome Chess Trick!

This Scam School video by Brian Brushwood falls under the category of 'swindles and pranks', and has amassed 1.84 million views in four years. Brian plays an amazing trick on the members of the Stanford University Chess Club. He engages them in a real puzzle, and then sets another one up in which he changes the rules without them being aware of it. He presents a mate in one – which no one can solve, and is absolutely correct in revealing the answer. It was beautiful how these guys fell for it – comic relief, surprise and lots of entertainment makes this video a must-see. Search on *YouTube* for 'FOOL a Genius with this Awesome Chess Trick!'

7 IM Greg Shahade vs 10-year-old chess master

Enough tricks and pranks: let's see some real players in action now! True, we have passed some sort of a magic barrier, for our following videos all feature real players.

First comes comic effect with speed chess combined: GM Sam Sevian, untitled and 10 years old at the time, beats International Master Greg Shahade during an impromptu blitz game. Sam's comments are hilarious, as is his continuous drinking of 7Up while he gives his mentor a beating.

This video, which exceeds 1.57 million views, can be found by searching on *YouTube* for 'IM Greg Shahade vs 10 year old chess master'.

8 Magnus Carlsen vs Kasparov

This is the famous clash of the generations that occurred at Reykjavik in 2004, when 13-year-old Magnus Carlsen drew with Garry Kasparov in a rapid game. This historically important battle got almost 1.44 million views in nearly five years, and provides nice proof that produced event videos, with interviews and interesting footage, will get more hits than spur-of-the-moment videos. Check it out on *YouTube* by searching for 'Magnus Carlsen vs Kasparov'.

9 Game of the Century

Presented by our star commentator, Kevin, this has achieved the remarkable feat of the most views – 1.36 million in just four and a half years – of any video showing this very famous game from Bobby Fischer, as the 13-year-old stunned the chess world by beating Donald Byrne in the Rosenwald Memorial in 1956. You can find it by searching on *YouTube* for 'Game of the Century – Bobby Fischer vs Donald Byrne'.

10 Carlsen-Morozevich, World Blitz Championship 2012

Here we have the exciting encounter between Magnus Carlsen and Alexander Morozevich during the 2012 World Blitz Championship in Astana, captured by Chessvibes, where Morozevich wins after almost spoiling it. It has got 1.4 million views, mostly for its amazing and intriguing finale. Check it out on *YouTube* by searching for 'Carlsen-Morozevich, World Blitz Championship 2012'.

11 Kasparov's Immortal

Trailing closely behind at 1.31 million views, this is the analytical video of arguably the most beautiful combination ever played, from the game Kasparov-Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 1999. Although dozens of videos have been posted on *YouTube* with detailed comments on this game, the absolute winner is our old friend Kevin again from *chesswebsite.com* who, in a video that was posted three and a half years ago, explains in simple language how Garry 'did it'. And by searching on *YouTube* for 'Kasparov's Immortal', you, too, can see just how he did it!

10-year-old Sam Sevian beats IM Greg Shahade and doesn't forget to rub it in.

12 Magnus Carlsen 30 second chess match

With over 1.37 million views, this video does what it says on the tin: you get to see Magnus Carlsen play with just 30 seconds on his clock, as he quickly (what choice did he have?) beats a girl – but it's the speed that matters! For more, go to *YouTube* and search for 'Magnus Carlsen 30 second chess match'.

13 Scacchi Clay Stop Motion

This one I appreciate for its attractiveness, beauty and elegance: a simple, clay stop motion animation of a chess game. It has got nearly 1.28 million views in over seven years and is just a wonderful video to watch. I suppose it should be in the category of art, close to the musical Chess, but I am sure you will enjoy it – so chill out by searching on *YouTube* for 'Scacchi Clay Stop Motion'.

14 Mozart of Chess

In America, *60 Minutes* is the flagship newsmagazine for the CBS television network. And here, in 2012, they profiled Magnus Carlsen just as he began his quest to reach the summit. With its wide network of followers, it got slightly above 1.26 million views in almost four years – somewhat disappointing, considering what a thoroughly professional job they made of it. Let's add to these numbers by searching now on *YouTube* for 'Mozart of Chess: Magnus Carlsen'.

15 Bobby Fischer's Chess Trap

There were many such 'Fischer traps', but this is the one where the American legend famously lodged his knight on e6 to crush an unsuspecting Sammy Reshevsky during the 1958 US Championship. As ever, it's presented by our superstar Kevin; and so far it's reached 1.22 million views. Search for it on *YouTube* with 'Bobby Fischer's Chess Trap'.

16 How to Achieve Checkmate in 2 Moves

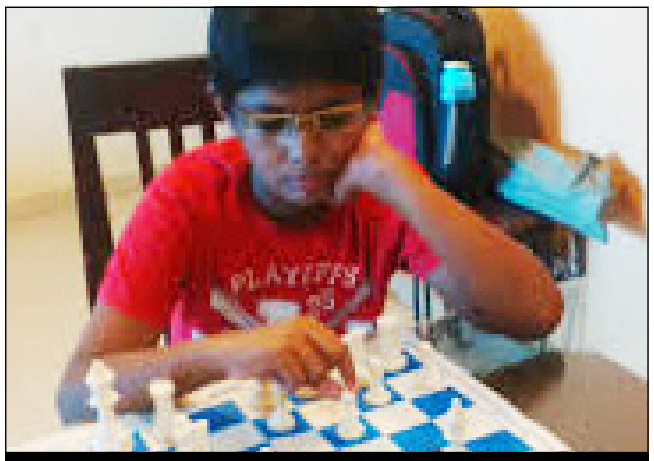
Here we have an amazing video on how to achieve checkmate in just a couple of moves, utilizing the L factor to its fullest. Incredibly it boasts 1.27 million views; and you can check it out on *YouTube* by searching for 'How to Achieve Checkmate in 2 Moves'.

17 Banter Blitz With GM Max Dlugy

And last but not least, here's the video that provoked this article in the first place, and gained me more views than any of the above-mentioned true chess videos in the first month after it came out. Notching up 1.08 million views at the time of writing, it can be found on *YouTube* by searching for 'GM Max Dlugy plays Banter Blitz'.

Mind you, you don't have to watch the entire video, as the relevant part runs from 8.58 to 12.20.

But you can also find it on the Internet Chess Club by entering the amazing handle TrickyMate. I looked at this guy's notes on the ICC and this is what TrickyMate, who crushed me with a beautiful trap in the Fajarowicz Variation of the Budapest Gambit, has to say about himself:



And this is 'TrickyMate', Shrayan 'Sunny' Majumbder (12) from Mumbai.

1. I'm a chess enthusiast.
2. I can teach buddies under 1600 for FREE; contact me for more info.
3. Crushed GM Dlugy, 1 of the best blitz players in the world, in 16 moves; look at my library to view the game.
4. I'm a rapid and blitz specialist and a classic classical player.

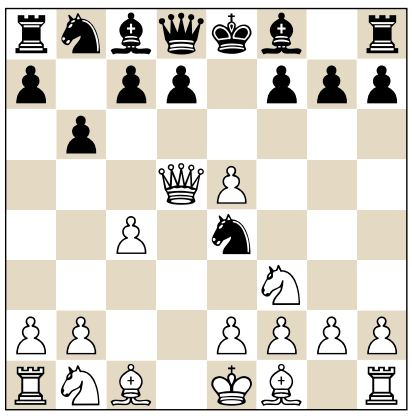
As I found out, TrickyMate is a nice 12-year-old schoolboy from Mumbai, Shrayan 'Sunny' Majumbder, and our encounter was already written up in a feature for the Mumbai online newspaper, *The Bayside Journal* (go to Google and search for 'Bayside Journal' and 'Dlugy').

When I looked at the video and tried to understand why it became so popular, I realized that, as I was falling into this trap, I did two very funny things: I

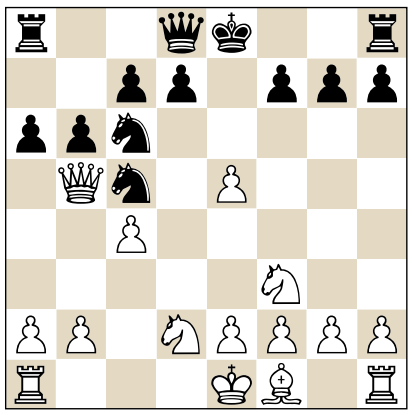
And mate is inevitable. A perplexed (and amused) Max Dlugy cannot believe it.

saw the trap coming and considered it to be unsound and commented on it. And repeatedly used my opponent's handle to explain what a tricky guy he is playing tricky openings and getting in these interesting tricks. The fact that his plan was absolutely sound made the whole thing absolutely hilarious, and I couldn't stop laughing when I watched it myself for the first time.

Maxim Dlugy - TrickyMate
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.de5 ♘e4 4.♘f3 b6 5.♕d5



5...♗b7! 6.♕xb7 ♘c6 7.♕a6? ♗b4+ 8.♗d2 ♘c5 9.♕b5 ♗xd2+ 10.♘bxd2 a6



11.♕xc6 dxc6 12.0-0-0 ♕e7 13.g3 0-0-0 14.♗g2 f6 15.exf6 ♕xf6 16.♖he1 ♘a4

See photo on previous page and Max Dlugy's baffled expression. 0-1.

This video clearly hit it big because it is funny and surprising; and I think the chess community would benefit if more and more strong players would create similar videos in the future.

I am already trying, and hopefully will have some success in cooking up a viral chess video soon. And I am sure that, as great events unfold in the future, more chess broadcasts will attract more and more spectators, and new popular million-plus chess videos will be popping up all over the place.

But what if we try to be proactive about it, and attempt to actually create one by skill and not by luck?

So to summarize, here are my suggestions for creating a popular chess video:

- Think of interesting chess content – whether your own or from some famous game.
- Record it in a nice setting, with good lighting and a clear view of the clock and board.
- Make it funny – either with fun commentary or some sort of gimmick.
- Either make it very fast or very, very simple, so lots of people can understand it.
- Think of a really engaging name for the video, so people would be curious to check it out.
- Post it on *reddit.com* to see how it does.
- Repeat steps 1-6 until you get a million hits.

Funny Money

Another good piece of news is that all this fun can be monetized! If you create your own *YouTube* channel, and link the *reddit.com* videos, you create and post them to your own channel, then sign up for *YouTube*'s monetization programme, which is explained in this simple L factor video you can find on *YouTube* by simply searching for 'Monetize Videos on YouTube'.

You can see the viewers roll in, and sit back and count your money. Estimates on the online forum range from $1-2 dollars per 1000 views; so if you get a million views, that's a couple of grand – not too shabby, once you find the recipe for making popular videos. And you can make a few a day! Just re-watch the chess cake recipe, if you think it's impossible. ■

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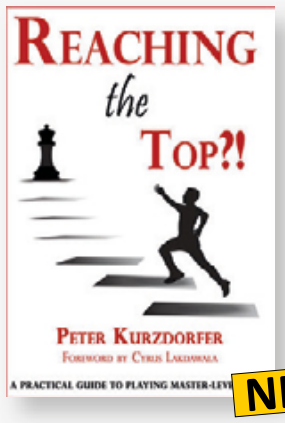

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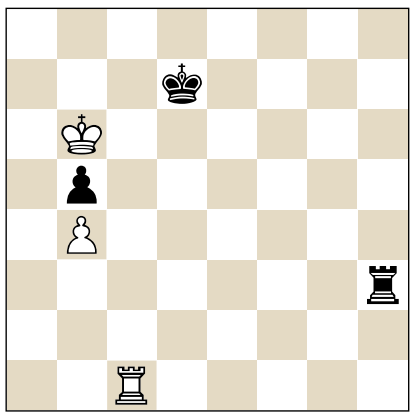
Jan Timman

Be prepared in the endgame

Inspired by Bobby Fischer, the role model for players of his generation, **JAN TIMMAN** has always been fascinated by endgames. In the Qatar Masters Open he saw a number of instructive mistakes.

In *My 60 Memorable Games*, Bobby Fischer recounts how Fridrik Olafsson, Iceland's first grandmaster and the later President of FIDE, once called him to account for playing a rook ending too quickly and superficially. This was the position concerned:

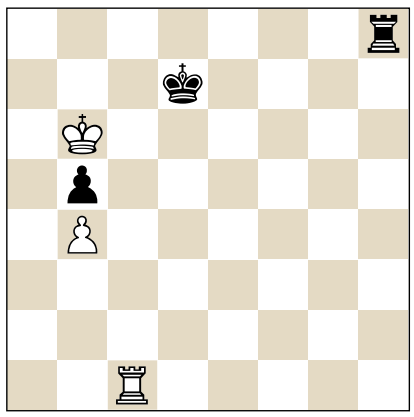


Gligoric-Fischer
Belgrade Candidates' 1959
position after 52.♖c1

This is, in fact, an elementary endgame, in which Black should quite obviously have played 52...♖h5. Now, for White to be able to capture the b-pawn, he will have to swap rooks, giving Black the opposition. But Black needs to continue to play accurately: the only reply to 53.♖c7+ is 53...♔d8!, since after 53...♔d6? 54.♖c5 the pawn ending would be lost after all.

52...♖h8?

Fischer played this at once, thinking that there wasn't any danger. Gligoric appeared to be of the same opinion, and went:



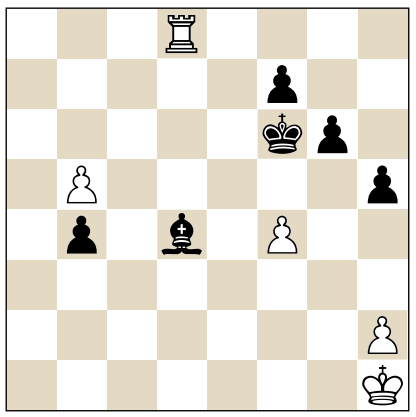
53.♔xb5?, after which Fischer gave check on b8 and made an easy draw. After the game, Olafsson told him that 53.♖c7+ would have won. Initially, Fischer didn't believe him, but after a thorough study of the position he was convinced. In fact, Olafsson did him a great service, because it encouraged Fischer to start studying endgames systematically, which made him a virtually invincible endgame virtuoso.

Interestingly enough, the alternative 53.♖c5 would also have won. It is important that White keep his king in its dominant position and that he picks up the b-pawn with his rook. After that the position will play itself, since the black king remains cut off.

Fischer was the great role model for players of my generation. *My 60 Memorable Games* was avidly read by everyone. I didn't skip a single game, nay, not even a sentence in the book. Everything that Fischer told his ghost writer Larry Evans was worthwhile. Following Fischer's example, I started studying theoretical endgames. Games were routinely adjourned after move 40 in those days. This was like throwing someone into the deep end to teach him to swim: you had no choice but to study endgames.

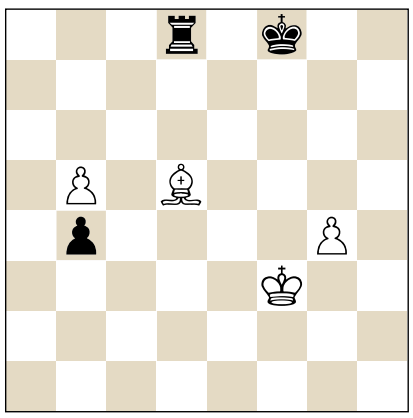
Since adjourned games are now a thing of the past, there is less time to play endgames as they should be played. This also ought to encourage people to make a thorough study of the endgame, but there is little evidence of it in practice. The number of games lost in the rook + bishop vs rook ending, even at grandmaster level, is astounding. And this is not helped by the fact that the computer tends to be a bad endgame advisor, especially in rook endings.

The Qatar tournament gave us a great number of games that fascinated at every stage. I also saw a number of interesting endgames with instructive mistakes. It started in Round 1.



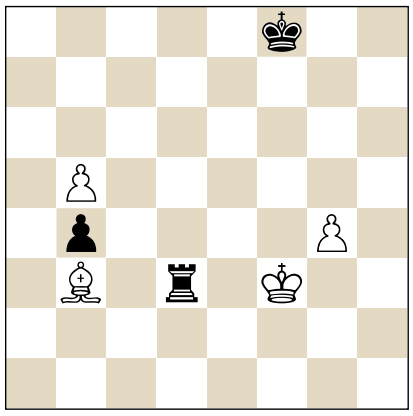
Gagare-Wei Yi
Doha 2016 (1)
position after 53.♖d8

In this position, Wei Yi resigned, causing some consternation, as the computer indicates that after 53...♗b6 White didn't even have all that much of an advantage. According to some commentators, Black had even resigned in a drawn position. But it wasn't that dramatic for the young Chinese player. It's true that White cannot take the bishop after 54.♖d6+ ♔e7, since this would allow the black b-pawn to queen (55.♖xb6? b3 and there is no way the rook can stop the pawn); but White can withdraw his rook to one of the lower ranks, after which Black faces a hopeless defence, his kingside superiority being insufficient.
Sometimes this is different, as witness the following position, a study based on the above game.



Timman 2016
White to play and draw

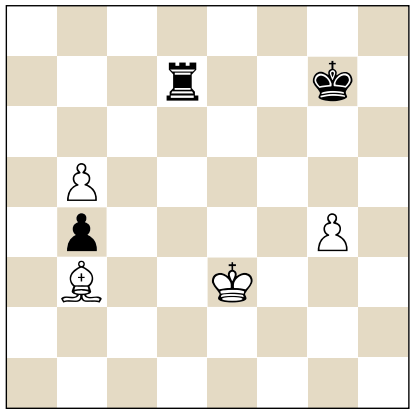
If the white passed pawn had been on one of the neighbouring squares on the kingside, White would be lost.
1.♗b3! The hidden turn that Wei Yi had overlooked. **1...♖d3+**



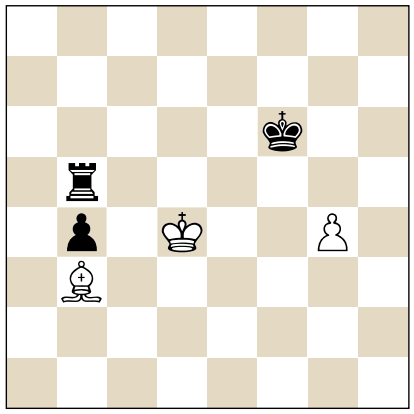
2.♔e2 With the pawn on h2 (instead of on g4), 2...♖h3 would have been winning. If it had been on h4, 2...♖d4

> 'Adjourned games were like throwing someone into the deep end to teach him to swim.'

would have been the winning move; if on f4, the game would also be lost. I will return to this later.
2...♖d7 3.♔e3 ♔g7
After 3...♔e7 the only move was 4.g5!. The black king is kept away.

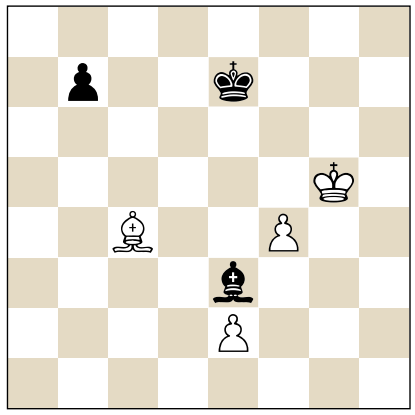


4.♔f4! The only move. Now 4.g5 would have been insufficient in view of 4...♔g6.
4...♖b7 5.♔e4(e3)
White has to abandon the b-pawn, but is in time to build up an impregnable defensive line.
5...♖xb5 6.♔d4 ♔f6



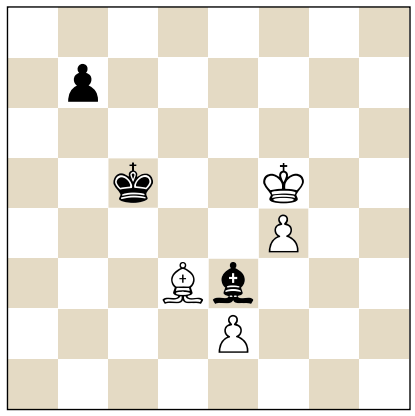
7.♔c4
And Black cannot win, e.g. 7...♖b8 8.♗d1 ♔g5 9.♔b3 ♔f4 10.♔c4 ♔e5 11.♗b3. If the black king attacks the g-pawn, White makes his king shuttle between b3 and c4. If it appears on e5, the bishop starts moving up and down on the a4-d1 diagonal. Here it becomes clear that with the pawn on f5 (instead of g4) the position would have been untenable. The white king and bishop would have been in each other's way.

In the third round the following ending attracted my attention.



So-Akopian
Doha 2016 (3)
position after 38.♔xg5

As we will see, Black would be lost without the b-pawn.
38...♔d6 Necessary centralization of the king.
39.♔f5 ♔c5!
This shows the importance of the b-pawn. It allows Black to play the finesse 40...♗xf4 after the centralizing 40.♔e4. He has no reason the fear the pawn ending.
40.♗d3
White has nothing better. There is no time for centralization.

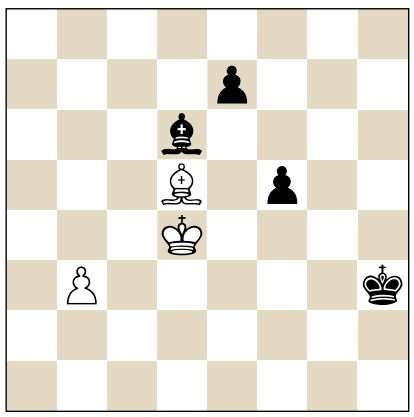


40...b5?
The notorious 40th move. Without the possibility to advance the b-pawn – for example because his

Jan Timman

king was on d5 instead of on c5 – Akopian would undoubtedly have played 40...♔d4. Also in the endgame, or perhaps particularly in the endgame, centralization is of great importance. Interestingly enough, the position is only a draw with the black pawn on b7, not if it is on b6. It took a while for me to understand why; the table bases provide moves but no explanations. First I thought that the b7-pawn took away squares from the white bishop, but this is of no consequence. Squares a6 and c6 don't play any part in White's possible winning plans. The reason is as follows: if White withdraws his king to f3, Black will be unable to maintain his central position. He has only one waterproof defence: withdrawing the bishop to the b8-h2 diagonal. But in that case it's important to reach square c7, because if the bishop goes to d6, White will eventually gain a tempo when he advances his e-pawn to e5. This is why the black pawn on b5 would be in the way of its own bishop.

But there's more: if White executes his plan to advance the king at once, it will be a draw even with the pawn on b6. To illustrate this, I will give you another modest study.



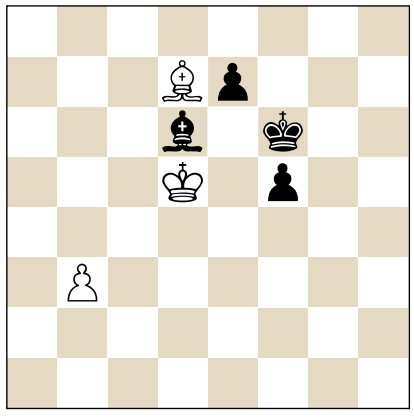
Timman 2016
White to play and draw

As in Gagare-Wei Yi, the colours are reversed.

1.♗e6 ♔g4 2.♔d5

Now we have So-Akopian with reversed colours, and with the important difference that the black king is on g4 instead of on f4. With the king on f4, Black would win with 2...♗b4, when the white bishop's hands are tied because Black will advance his e-pawn. This gives Black the chance to take his bishop to a5, whereas the white king is stuck to d4 and d5. Taking the black king to f6 then guarantees the draw, since the white b-pawn prevents the bishop from going to c2.

2...♔g5 3.♗d7! ♔f6



4.♗a4!! An absolutely astonishing move. I wonder if this would ever have been found over the board. It's also very surprising that we have mutual zugzwang now. The white pieces are optimally placed, while Black has problems finding a good square for his bishop. If it had been on a5, Black would have been able to advance his e-pawn.

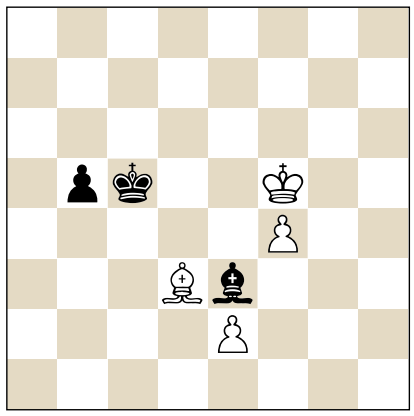
4...♗a3

If it goes to b8, the white b-pawn will advance, and the white bishop will neatly land on c2.

5.♔c4 e5 6.b4

And drawn. The black bishop has been sidelined, e.g. 6...e4 7.♔d5 and White has full control.

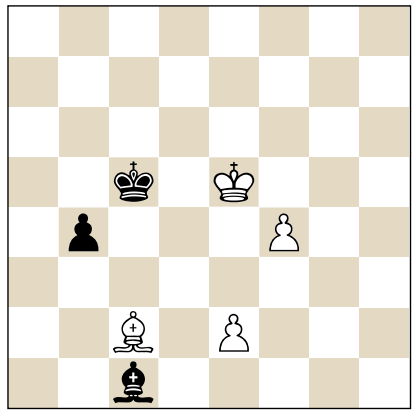
Back to So-Akopian.



41.♔e4 ♗c1 42.♔e5

Of course. Now White has a strong central position for his king, which guarantees the win.

42...b4 43.♗c2



43...♔c4 Mike Klein, on *ChessVibes*, opines that Black could have held the draw with 43...♗b2+, giving the following line, amongst others, to back up this assessment: 44.♔e6 ♔d4 45.e4 ♗c1 46.f5 ♔c3, and White just fails to win, the white bishop having too few squares. But White has a study-like win: 46.♔f5! (instead of 46.f5) 46...♔c3 47.♗b1! ♔b2 48.♗d3 ♔c3 49.e5!, and if Black captures the bishop, he will eventually lose – after both pawns have queened – to a queen check on e4. Remarkably enough, the black b-pawn blocks the way for its own bishop here as well: the a3-f8 diagonal is clogged.

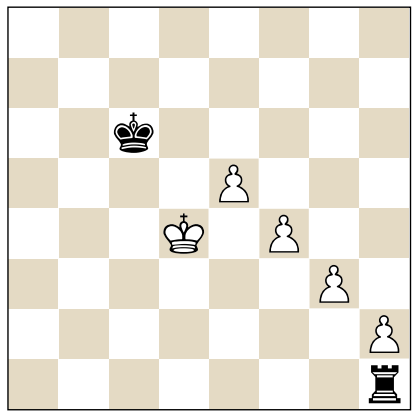
44.f5 ♗b2+ 45.♔e6 b3 46.♗b1!

White must continue to play accurately. After 46.♗d3+ ♔d4 he would be unable to win.

46...♗a3 47.e4 ♔d4 48.f6

Black resigned.

In Round 6 there was this ending.



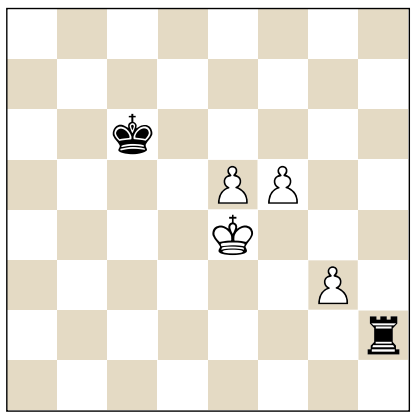
Sundararajan-Moiseenko
Doha 2016 (6)
position after 57...♖h1

White will lose his h-pawn, leading to a theoretical endgame of three pawns vs rook. I discussed a similar endgame in New In Chess 2001/6 in connection with a game Manor-Macieja, Willemstad 2001, except that the pawns were on the f-, g- and h-files there. That endgame was already known in the 19th century from a game Mason-L. Paulsen, Vienna 1882. In this game, the structure has moved one file to the left, but this makes no difference to the principles of the endgame. White can make a draw by forming a pawn phalanx – e6-f5-g4 in this case – and transferring his king to the correct square. The weak point in the phalanx is the g-pawn, and White must take care to prevent it being attacked from below, from g1. For this reason, the white king must not support the phalanx from f4 or g5, for fear it would be out-manoeuvred. With the black rook on the back rank, White must keep his king on f2 or g2. Let's assume that the black king will reach its best square, g5. With the rook on the first rank White needn't be afraid of Black taking on g4, since this would make the e- and f-pawns too strong. If Black were to transfer the rook to the eighth rank, the white king should be on g3 or f3, otherwise Black would capture on g4 after all. If, finally, the black rook were to go to the fourth rank, White must play his king back and forth between e3 and f3 to stop Black from taking on g4 with check. These guidelines are not difficult, but the rest of the game shows that both players sometimes seem to be completely in the dark.

58.f5 A good move. White prepares the phalanx. Other possibilities would have been 58.e6 and 58.♔e3.

58...♖xh2 59.♔e4

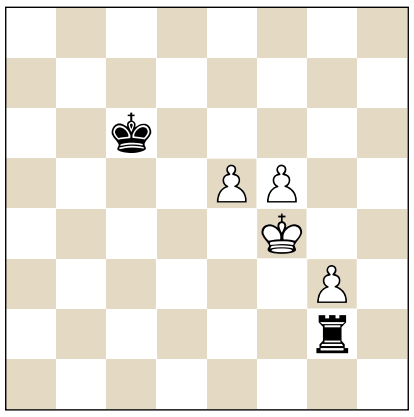
But this is wrong. White should have played 59.♔e3.



59...♖g2

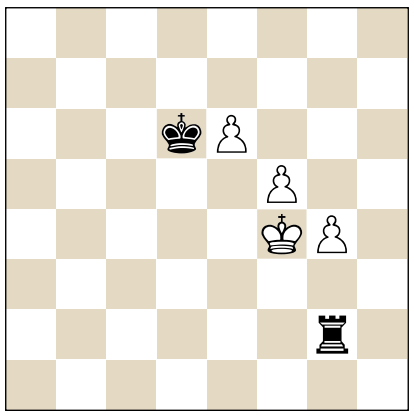
Black fails to exploit White's mistake. He had four winning rook moves: 59...♖h1, 59...♖f2, 59...♖e2+ and 59...♖h3. The latter move is particularly surprising. Its point is in the line 60.♔f3 ♔d5 61.e6 ♔e5 62.♔g2 ♖h8! 63.g4 ♔f4, and Black wins the pawns.

60.♔f4 On the wrong track again. 60.♔f3 was absolutely necessary.



60...♔d5 And again Black fails to pounce. He should have gone 60...♖g1! in order to meet 61.e6 with 61...♔d6.

61.e6 ♔d6 62.g4 Handing Black the win on a platter. With 62.♔f3 ♖g1 63.♔f2 he could have manoeuvred himself into drawing territory.



62...♔e7!

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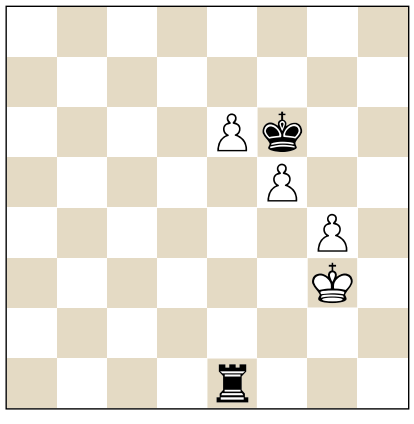
Jan Timman

The correct approach. The king is on its way to g5.

63.♔g5

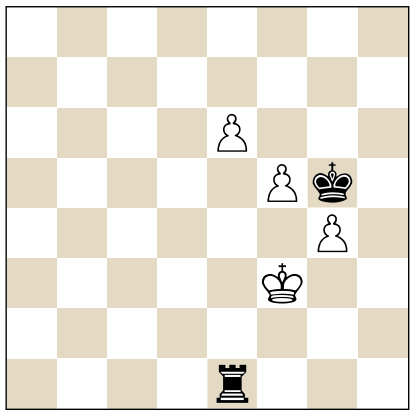
A vain attempt to stop the black king. White will be unable to stay on g5.

63...♖g1 64.♔h5 ♔f6 65.♔h4 ♖e1 66.♔g3



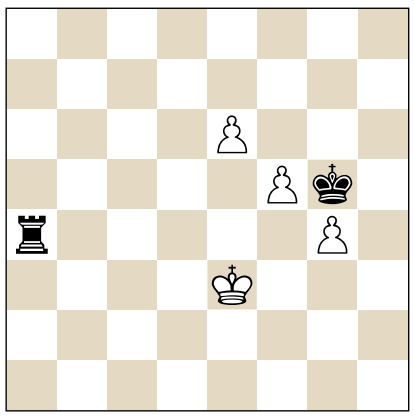
66...♔g5 Letting the win slip again. Correct was 66...♖f1, to keep the white king away. After 67.♔g2 ♖f4 68.♔g3, 68...♔g5 would have been winning.

67.♔f3 Allowing the rook to go to g1. Correct was 67.♔f2, and White would be safe.



67...♖e5 The rook has no business here. 67...♖g1 was the winning move.

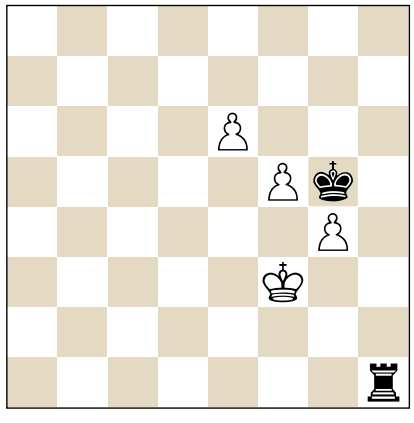
68.♔g3 ♖e3+ 69.♔f2 ♖a3 70.♔g2 ♖b3 71.♔f2 ♖c3 72.♔g2 ♖c4 73.♔f3 ♖a4 74.♔e3



Sundararajan seems to have the endgame under control, with nothing to fear now.

74...♖b4 75.♔f3 ♖c4 76.♔e3 ♖a4 77.♔f3 ♖a1 78.♔f2 ♖a3 79.♔g2 ♔f6 80.♔f2 ♔e7 81.♔g2 ♔d6 82.♔f2 ♔e5 83.♔g2 ♖b3 84.♔f2 ♔d6 85.♔g2 ♔e7 86.♔f2 ♔f6 87.♔g2 ♔g5 88.♔f2 ♖h3 89.♔g2 ♖h8 90.♔f3 ♖h4 91.♔e3 ♖h1 92.♔f3

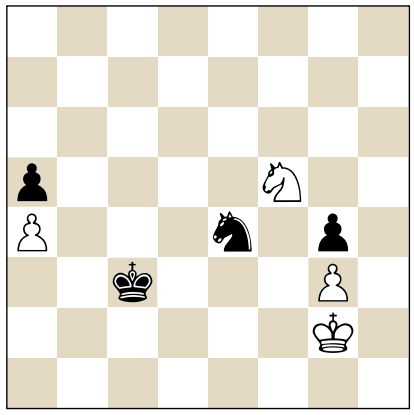
But in the end he errs again, for the fifth time, and now Moiseenko does pounce.



92...♖g1! Now the game is his.

93.♔e3 ♖g3+ 94.♔d4 ♖xg4+ 95.♔e5 ♖g1 White resigned.

The final fragment is taken from a game from the same round.

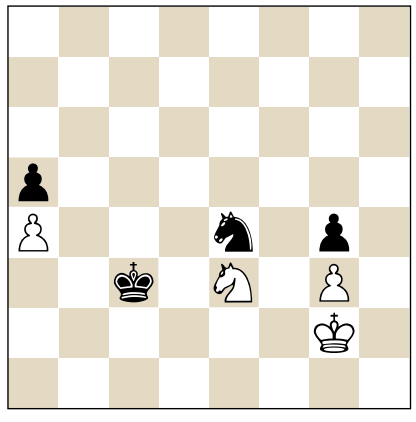


Hou Yifan-Vignesh
Doha 2016 (6)
position after 62...♔c3

Earlier in the game, Hou Yifan had been completely winning, but in the late middlegame she had spoiled all her advantage. Now she must play very accurately to save the game.

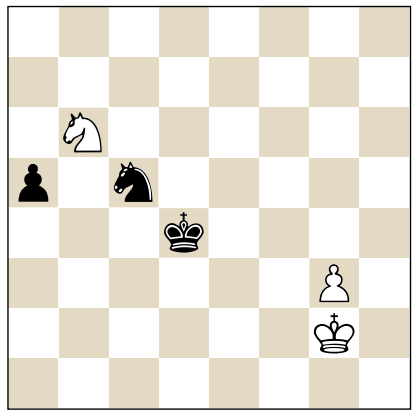
63.♘e3

The wrong plan. Correct was 63.♔f1!, in order to reach the threatened queenside as quickly as possible. After 63...♔b4 64.♔e2 ♔xa4 65.♔d3 Black would be unable to win.



63...♘f6

Now White is vindicated after all. Black should have thought of the principle that the outside pawn is the knight's natural enemy. With 63...♘c5 he could have won, the point becoming clear after 64.♘xg4 ♘xa4 65.♘e3 ♘c5 66.♘d5+ ♔d4 (66...♔b3 is also fine, with the same point) 67.♘b6, and now there follows the magnificent knight sac



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

67...♘d7!!. If the 18-year-old Indian had seen this, he would have got to 4½ out of 6, with a TPR in excess of 2800.

64.♔f2 ♔b3 65.♔e2 ♔xa4 66.♘c4

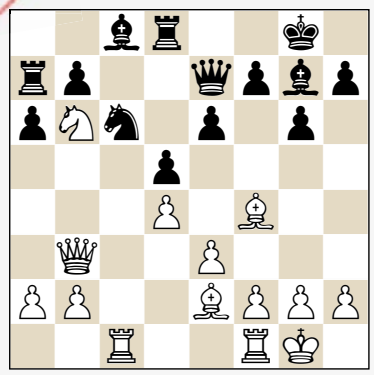
Securing the draw. White is going to give her knight for the dangerous outside pawn.

66...♔b4 67.♘xa5 ♔xa5 68.♔e3

Draw. The black king is too far away. ■

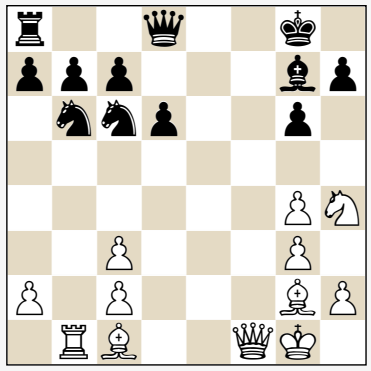
Solutions

from page 41



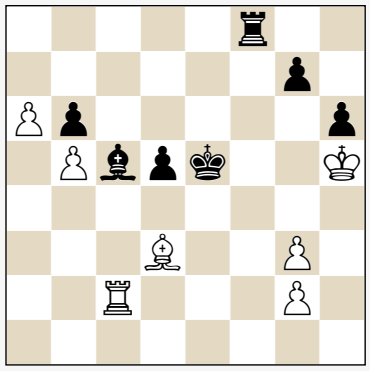
1. Gorovets-Homa
Phoenix 2015

16.♗b8! winning the exchange – and in case of 16...♘xb8 17.♘xc8 even more. Black resigned.



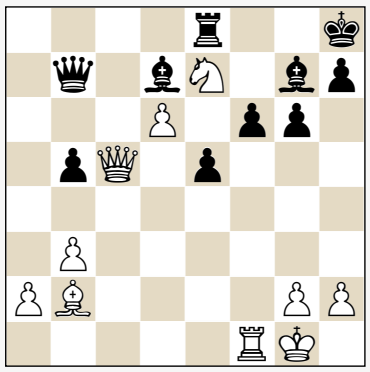
2. Burmakin-Manakov
Schwäbisch Gmünd 2013

16.♖xb6! Getting access to the key square d5. Black resigned in view of 16...axb6 17.♗d5+ ♔h8 18.♘xg6+! hxg6 19.♕h3+ and the queen effectively boxes itself in.



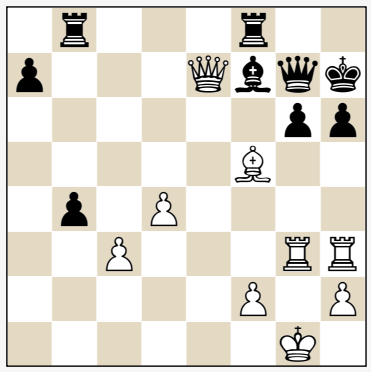
3. Dvoirys-Gorodetzky
Jerusalem 2015

50.♖xc5! bxc5 51.b6 ♔d6 52.♗b5! An essential move as anything else just loses. With his king cut off and a6-a7, b6-b7 coming next, Black duly resigned.



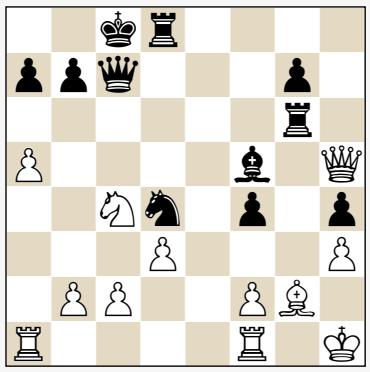
4. Ganguly-Piorun
Berlin 2015 rapid

34.♖xf6! ♖xe7 34...♗xf6 35.♕xe5! leads to mate. Better was 34...♕e4 but after 35.♕xe5 White is winning. **35.dxe7 ♗xf6 36.e8♕+!** 36...♗xe8 37.♕f8 mate. Black resigned.



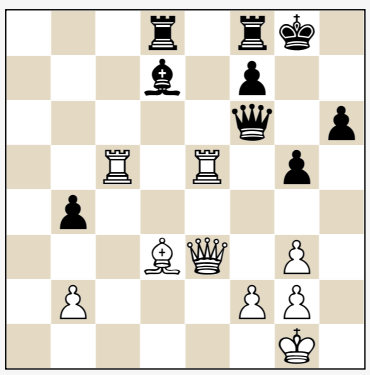
5. Codenotti-A.Vovk
Trieste 2015

32.♗xg6+! ♗xg6 33.♖xg6! Black resigned: if 33...♔xg6 then 34.♖g3+, while after 33...♕xe7 34.♖hxh6 his king is trampled to death.



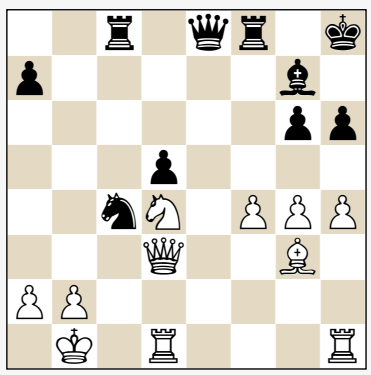
6. Munoz-Jumabayev
Berlin 2015 rapid

25...f3! 26.♗xf3 ♖h6 27.♕g5 The white queen and bishop are lured to the required squares. **27...♕h2+! 28.♔xh2 ♘xf3+ 29.♔h1 ♘xg5** and Black converted the extra piece.



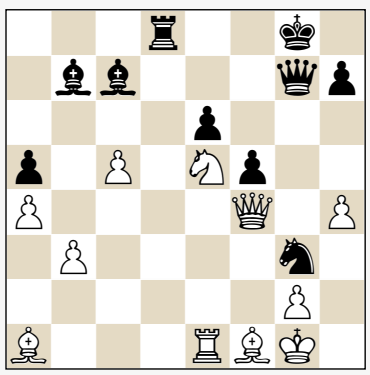
7. Paikidze-Mirzoeva
Moscow 2012

33.♖xg5+! hxg5 33...♔h8 34.♕e4 and wins. **34.♖xg5+ ♔h8 35.g4! ♕h6** 35...♗xg4 36.♖xg4 ♖d6 37.♕h3+ ♕h6 38.♖h4 doesn't save either. **36.♖g8+ ♔xg8 37.♕xh6 f5 38.♗c4+** Black resigned.



8. Hawkins-Bartel
London 2013

26...♘xb2! 27.♔xb2 ♖c4! Attacking the knight and at the same time preparing the entrance of the queen. **28.♗f2 ♕b5+** White resigned as he loses the queen after 29.♕b3 ♖b4 or 29.♔a1 ♖c1+!.



9. Nikolic-Dreev
Berlin 2015 rapid

30...♖d1! 31.♕c4!? 31.♖xd1 ♘e2+!; 31.♕f2 ♖xa1 32.♖xa1 ♕xe5. **31...♖xe1 32.♕xe6+ ♔f8 33.♘d7+ ♕xd7! 34.♕xe1** 34.♕xd7 ♖xf1+ 35.♔h2 ♖h1 mate. **34...♘xf1 35.♕xf1 ♕d5** and Black won.

Yannick Pelletier

CURRENT RATING: 2571
DATE OF BIRTH: September 22,1976
PLACE OF BIRTH: Biel, Switzerland
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Paris, France

What is your favourite colour?
Blue.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Japanese.

And what drink?
Red wine.

Who is your favourite author?
I haven't read much besides books about babies recently, but it used to be Somerset Maugham.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Perhaps *Cinema Paradiso* by Giuseppe Tornatore.

What is your favourite TV series?
Dexter (but why the hell is it finished?).

Do you have a favourite actor?
American: Robert DeNiro. French: Michel Serrault.

And a favourite actress?
Meryl Streep.

What music do you like to listen to?
Mostly classical.

Do you have a favourite artist?
French songwriter and singer Georges Brassens.

What was your best result ever?
Hm...11/11 at a blitz tournament in the Biel chess club some 20 years ago...

What was the best game you ever played?
I'd say Ponomariov-Pelletier, Biel 2004: interesting prep, original game, and I don't think I made any mistakes.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Tigran Petrosian, because I can't understand, let alone guess half of his moves.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Not really, but I like games collections in which a champion annotates his own games.

What was the most exciting chess game you have ever seen?
Without trying to look back too far, Navara-Wojtaszek, Biel 2015.

What is the best chess country in the world?
I guess it must still be Russia.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Complaining.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
They tend to be selfish.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
Being quite a bad chess player, I definitely need to have some!

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
A billionaire lying on my private beach.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Roger Federer, Gandhi, Einstein. In three separate dinners.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
Stop wasting time and energy on people who don't like you.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Chess.

Where is your favourite place in the world?
Home.

What is your greatest fear?
Death doesn't look too promising...

How do you relax?
Good question! Some holiday badly needed!

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
No more cheating. Of any kind.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
All rules make sense, if applied at the right occasion. For instance, zero tolerance has no business in Opens or Olympiads.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
Since he's not been born yet, let's throw dice: Mexican!

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
For marketing purposes, we'll claim that it is.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'[Chess] is a foolish expedient for making idle people believe they are doing something very clever, when they are only wasting their time.' – George Bernard Shaw, *The Irrational Knot*.

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- **What has Richard Rapport done now to the King’s Gambit?**
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- **Why did Baadur Jobava start playing 1.b3 ?**
- **When can White push e4-e5 in the Exchange Ruy Lopez?**
- **Has Andrea Stella pulled the spines out of the Hedgehog?**
- **How dangerous is Alfonso Almeida’s 6.♗c4 with 7.g4 against the Najdorf?**
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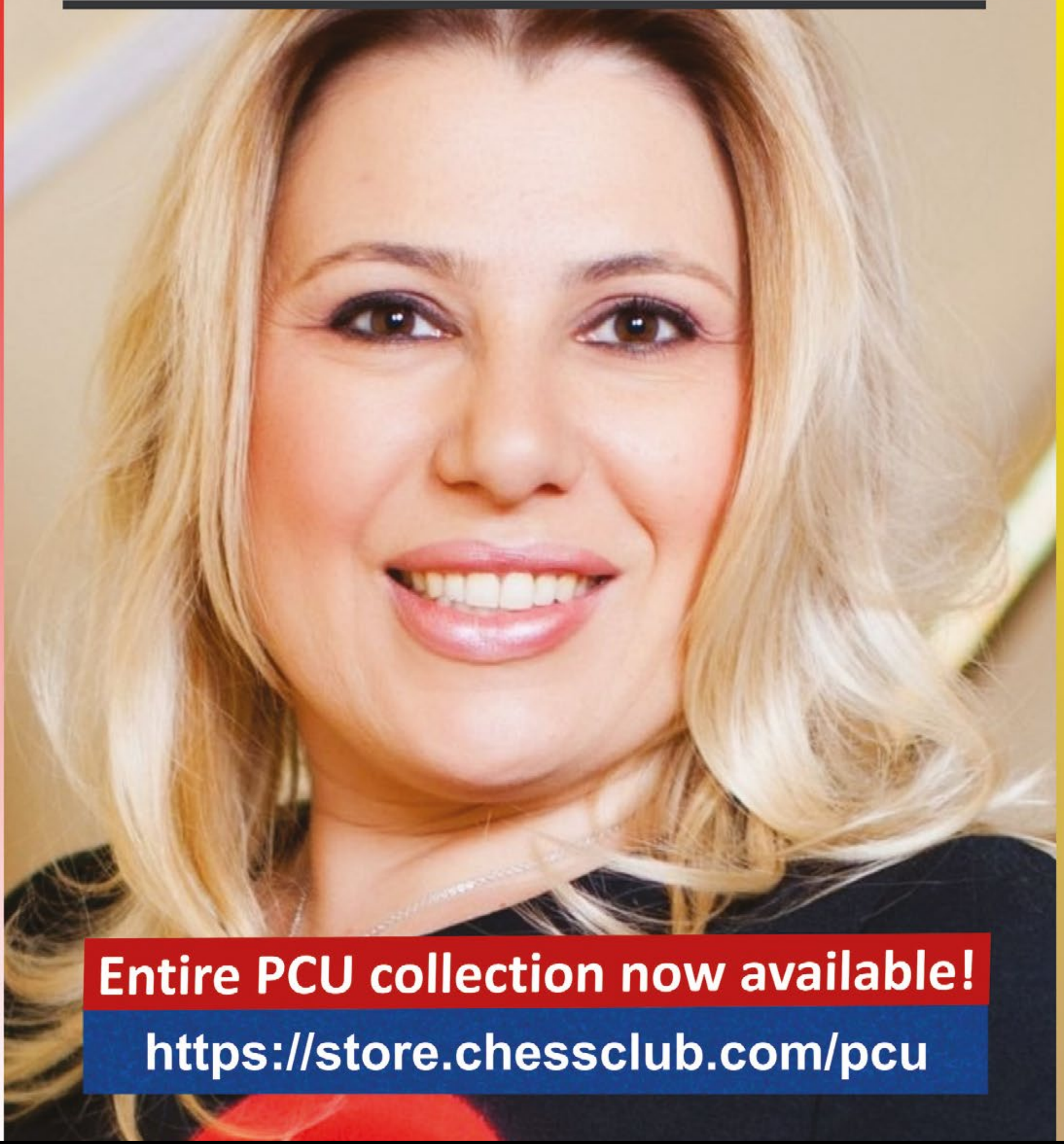

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